

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

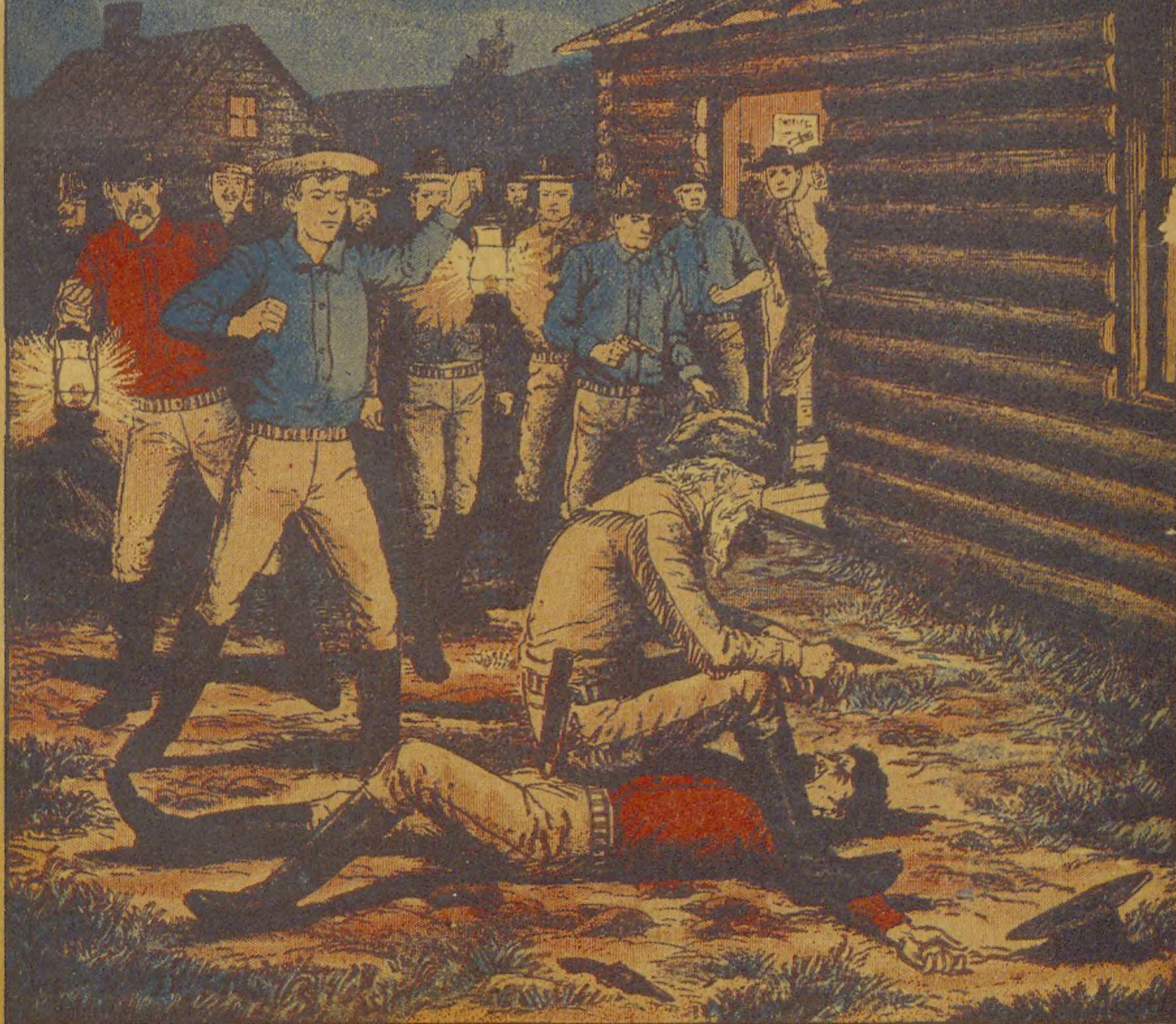
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No. 1188

NEW YORK, MARCH 9, 1921

Price 7 Cents

GOLD GULCH; DR. PANDY ELLIS' LAST TRAIL AND OTHER STORIES.



He was thrown to the ground. At this instant, a crowd of men came pouring from The Road to Ruin. Some of them bore lamps, and a hoarse shout went up when they discovered old Bolly Wherrit seated astride the reckless road agent.

PLUCK AND LUCK

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GOLD GULCH

OR, PANDY ELLIS' LAST TRAIL

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.—The Overland Coach From Greenhorn Ranch.

"Halt!"

Comanche Jack, the driver of the coach, drew his steeds in with an abruptness that jerked them upon their haunches. In front of the coach and barring further progress was a man. He was mounted upon a coal-black horse that was remarkable for its magnificent build. Although considered a fearless man himself so far as taking great risks was concerned, the Texan driver of the overland mail made a wise conclusion when he discerned the slender figure of the road agent through the dusky twilight.

"Throw up your arms, Comanche Jack!" came the stern order; and with a laugh the driver obeyed, for he had nothing to lose, and knew better than to incur the displeasure of this king of robbers, whose oath of vengeance would speedily be followed by the death of the poor devil who was so unlucky as to offend him.

"All right; you know me. Now turn and inform your passengers that they will please get their articles of value in readiness, for the hour is late, and I have no time to lose." He obeyed the order he had received by turning and putting his mouth close to the opening used as a means of conference between the driver and his passengers:

"Gentlemen, one and all, we are stopped on the highway, and you will have the pleasure of being robbed by the prince of road agents, Dare-Devil Darrel. He has commanded me to bid you get your little deposits ready, as he is in a hurry. And," continued Jack, in a lower tone, "let me advise you to make no resistance, for he has his whole band at hand, and a foolish shot would cost us all our lives."

"Well said, Comanche Jack," cried the road agent, in a loud voice and with a ringing laugh, for he had heard all of the driver's speech. "It would not be well for any man to stir up Dare-Devil Darrel. Charlie, come forward with the light." The hoofstrokes of a horse sounded upon the hard rock, and a mounted man, bearing a lantern in his hand, rode forward toward the coach. By his own light his form was made visible, and also his face. It was a countenance peculiarly marked, for while it had a dashing, reckless, handsome look about it, want of principle and an excess of dissipation had left their cruel marks there. The reader will learn more of Prince

Charlie as our story progresses. He rode fearlessly to one side of the coach, and resting an immense revolver upon the door, held the lantern so that the inside of the vehicle was lighted up. At the same instant the masked chief of the Black Hills road agents made his appearance at the other window.

"Gentlemen," said he, rapping on the woodwork of the door with his revolver, in a way that was peculiarly suggestive of his determined character, "and ladies, I should say, as I perceive one of the fair sex in the corner yonder, I am Dare-Devil Darrel, the keeper of the highway. At this point you must pay toll before being allowed to pass on. Charlie, whistle for the men to keep an eye on Mr. Comanche Jack! I'm afraid of him ever since that affair at the Bowlder Canyon. Now, gentlemen, we will proceed to business. I am a gallant man, and always pay my respects to the ladies first. Madam, what have you worth the taking?" The veiled figure in the corner of the coach, that had sat as though petrified while the road agent was speaking, now seemed to become aroused. A small gloved hand was thrust out, and the play-toy it held aimed at Darrel. The sharp crack, like the discharge of a percussion cap, immediately followed, as the tiny revolver was discharged. Dare-Devil Darrel did not even start as the little bullet severed a lock of hair from over his forehead, touching his skin in its passage. The veiled figure gave a little cry and sank back helpless in her corner, the small weapon falling from her nerveless grasp.

"Thank you, madam, you came within an ace of ruining the good looks of the handsomest road agent who ever took toll upon a western trail. If you will be so obliging, please to hand over your jewelry, money or anything of value you may have about you," said Dare-Devil Darrel, quietly. The veiled woman seemed to understand that there was no redress, and complied with his modest request, giving up some very valuable jewels and a purse well-filled with money. To prove his gallantry to the fair sex, the road agent quickly handed the latter back, minus only half its contents.

"You may need it, madam. Now, gentlemen, shell out, and the sooner you do so the better it will be for you," and he rapped his heavy revolver on the door as he turned to the rest of the passengers. The light of the lantern held by Prince Charlie revealed the fact that these passengers were three in number. One of them

was a miner, who had heard enough of the famous road agent to know the folly of resistance, and who handed out his belt of gold dust with a heartrending groan as he thought of the weeks of hard labor it had taken him to gather this little store of precious dust together. A second of these three was a young man, handsome and light-hearted, who handed over a very thin purse, and defied the bandit to find anything more of value on his person, for if he could he would be welcome to it, as it was more than he was capable of doing. The third passenger was a tall, angular trapper, dressed in greasy buckskin, and with his face almost wholly concealed by a shaggy, snow-white beard. He seemed to think that this being stopped and robbed by road agents was the most ludicrous thing that had ever occurred to him, and while his companions were shelling out, chuckled hugely.

"Now, my jovial old fellow, we'll pay our respects to you. What have you got worth taking?" said Dare-Devil Darrel, shifting his revolver so that it bore upon the body of the greasy trapper.

"Wouldn't like my old Betsy, would ye, judge? If she air an old rifle she kin shute. What else could ye expect from a pore lone trapper like me?" said the old fellow, in a mock alarmed tone.

"Come, come, my greasy friend, I think if you were to hand your belt out, you'd find something in it," said the road agent, impatiently. At this the old trapper laughed immoderately, and handed out a very heavy belt.

"Now put your hand under the seat. A little bird whispered to me that you will find a tin box there, peculiarly heavy, which I am very anxious to possess," said Darrel, grimly. The old trapper now laughed outright.

"Anything more, squire? It's a pesky shame, ye know, but this ole coon kin stand it, an' tain't every day az wun kin be robbed by sich a gent az ye air, ye know," laughed the queer old fellow, as he handed over the heavy tin box in question.

"Thank you, my greasy friend; you must have struck a pocket of considerable richness, judging from the weight of these. I like to make the acquaintance of such gentlemen as you, and can only hope that we may meet again before long," said Darrel.

"Squire, set your mind easy on that; we'll meet ag'in afore very long, but be keerful, squire, that ther boot ain't on the other leg afore long," and the strange old fellow indulged in a dry chuckle.

"I'm willing to take all the risks, my greasy friend, and will remember all you have said. I think there is nothing left for me to do, seeing that my bold henchman, Prince Charlie has carried off the mail, although it's little we'll find in that. I wish you good-day, gentlemen. Remember the prince of the road. Madam, bon jour," and he lifted his hat gallantly.

The veiled figure trembled, whether with rage or fear none could say, but not a word escaped from her lips. Dare-Devil Darrell gave a light laugh, and turned away, telling Comanche Jack to drive on. Twenty yards further on the ledge widened considerably, and the coach passed a dozen mounted men, whose dark outlines could be seen against the white rock even in the gath-

ering gloom, as they drew up in single file against the high wall to allow a passage for the coach.

In ten minutes the reckless driver put the whip to his horses, and the coach rattled over the rough road at a rapid pace, plunging so violently at times as to almost throw the travelers from their seats. The miner was cursing his luck under his breath, and eyeing the white-bearded trapper strangely. Indeed, the latter did act queerly, what with his hearty though silent laughs and grotesque motions. At length, the miner's curiosity was aroused, and he begged to know what fun there could be in having such an amount of gold stolen, as he should like to try the same recipe himself.

"Gold!" cried the old hunter. "That belt an' box war filled with copper filings I bought fur two dollars at Bismarck. I thought they'd hev a spy around, and it seems I was right. My gold air safe in my belt hyar. Drive fast, Comanche Jack, fur ef they overtake us thar's goin' ter be a hefty scrimmage," and he raised his voice.

As the coach rattled along, the muffled voice of the miner was heard, calling down maledictions on his own head for not having been sharp enough to delude the road agents in a like manner.

CHAPTER II.—A Trifling Case of Mistaken Identity.

"Hang him!"

"Lynch the hound!"

"Tar and feather the varmint!"

"Shooting's too good for him. Take him alive!"

The dense crowd of woolen-shirted, long-bearded miners surged forward, as these and many other cries came from their midst. Huge revolvers, and long, cruel-looking Bowie knives shone in the light of an immense bonfire that was crackling and roaring near by, momentarily gaining additional vigor. It was a terrible sight to see this mob of angry men giving way to their passions, but when the fact became apparent that this abuse was all directed toward one individual, the case assumed a graver aspect if such a thing were possible. A dead tree, the trunk of which was of considerable diameter considering the rocky place where it had once flourished, stood in the open space, a grim sentry to the entrance of Lucky Find Camp. Against this tree stood the figure of a man, with both hands extended, and in each a ready revolver, which were intended to do good execution when the time came. His hat had been lost in the scrimmage with a couple of miners, that had preceded this threatening state of affairs, and his hair hung down over his shoulders in brown, curling masses. The desperate situation in which he found himself had caused an unnatural paleness to come over the young man's face, but beyond that he seemed to bear no evidence of having become alarmed, for his hands were perfectly steady as he held out the pair of finely-made revolvers, and whatever he might turn out to be, he was certainly grit to the back-bone.

"What's ther matter hyar?" asked our leather-

clad friend of the stage-coach, as, rifle in hand, he elbowed his way into the throng.

"We've got the reptile at last. They've sent for Red Robbin to come and identify him," said a red-shirt miner, glad of the opportunity to use his tongue to some advantage.

"Who do you mean by their reptile?" persisted the greasy trapper.

"Dare-Devil Darrel, to be sure."

"What, ther road agent?"

"Eggsactly, the prince of road agents they call him, and if this feller turns out to be Darrel, thar'll be strange fruit on this tree in less than three minutes. Thar comes Red Robbin; if he says it's the road agent, all airth can't save him, for the boys hev got their dander up."

Having gained a position near the front rank of the angry mob, the trapper planted himself directly behind a huge miner and awaited further developments; nor had he long to wait. The half-drunken man with the flaming red beard was assisted on each side by a stout miner, and in this way forced through the crowd. He was soon face to face with the young man who stood at bay.

"Red Robbin, air that yer old chief, Dare Devil Darrel?" shouted one of the excited men.

"It air," answered the wretch with a grin.

"Ye'll swar to it?"

"I'll swar to it?"

"That air enough. Young man, yer doom is sealed."

At this critical juncture, however, when it seemed as though nothing could delay the inevitable doom that was settling upon Howard Lancing, a loud voice called out one word:

"Hold!"

As he spoke this commanding word the greasy trapper who had played such a desperate trick upon the prince of road agents in the coach from Green Horn Ranch, pushed his way through the outer line of the crowd, and took up his station besides the young man. The latter recognized in him his fun-loving and eccentric companion of the lonely ride, and greeted him with a smile that illuminated his pale face like magic, while the first thrill of hope passed through his frame.

"Waal, what now?" demanded the Regulator from Drown-'em-out Creek.

"What now?" cried the old trapper, as he turned like a wildcat upon Dan, "what now? I tell ye thar never war sich a pack o' born fools, leastways I never kim acrost 'em, an' I've seen a good many in my day—bust my moccasins if I ain't. This hyar young man air my friend—do ye hear, my friend!—an' ther fust critter w'at lifts a hand agin him dies like a dog. Thar's ther plain Latin fur it; put thet in yer pipe an' smoke it."

The rifle of the trapper came swinging around the circle until it bore upon the breast of Regulator Dan, when it became stationary.

"Gents," said that worthy, appealing to the crowd, "what d'ye think of this? Is this ole critter an accomplice, and is it all a regular plan to git the road agent away, after which they can laugh in their sleeves at us?"

The crowd thought it evidently was, judging from the cries and oaths that proceeded from it.

"Git up Red Robbin!" yelled one man.

"A good ijee!" declared another.

The half-drunken wretch was again hauled forward, and with a readiness that was absolutely refreshing, identified the white-bearded trapper as the prince of road agents' right-hand man, Handsome Charlie, sometimes called Prince Charlie. Several in the crowd began to doubt the wisdom of their course at this, but there were spirits assembled there who would have believed anything and they received this information with a yell.

"The critter's disguised! Down with both of 'em! We want justice here!" were the cries.

In another minute some act on either side would have precipitated matters, after which there could be no drawing back, and a most terrible fight would have been the result. At this moment, however, a man forced his way through the crowd.

"What's this, Dan?" he demanded of the man from Drown 'em-out Creek.

"Hurrah, boys! here's Comanche Jack, the fire-eater. Jack, here's a chance to lead us. Thar stands Dare-Devil Darrel and Prince Charlie!" yelled the excited Regulator, who dared not make a move as long as that rifle covered him.

The Texan stage-driver strode up and took his position beside the old trapper, who laughed grimly.

"Why not let 'em hev it out, Jack, my boy. Thar's blood in their eyes, an' I'm willing ter 'commode' 'em any day. Thar's sum wolf blood in me ter-night, an' I feel able ter chaw ther whole lot o' 'em up. What made ye cum, Jack?" he said.

"'Cause some of 'em are my friends, and I don't want to see 'em hurt. Gentlemen, ye've made a mistake that it'll take some time ter rectify. This Prince Charlie, as ye call him, I used to know in the southwest, and then he sailed under the plain name of Pandy Ellis."

Then a single voice broke out in a loud shout for old Pandy Ellis. It was Regulator Dan who gave utterance to this yell, and in another instant the cry was caught up by the rest, until they fairly made the welkin ring with their resounding huzzas. Pandy Ellis was then made the recipient of an impromptu ovation. His reputation was as well known in the mines as that of gallant Custer had been with the Indians, and significant words, full of alarm, passed between various men in the crowd, whose business was not strictly legitimate, for the trapper chief was known to be the enemy of the class. Comanche Jack at length came up, and speaking a few words to him, led the famous scout away.

CHAPTER III.—The Prince of Road Agents.

A solitary horseman was riding down the rocky road which we have seen the mail coach from Green Horn Ranch pass. His pace was rapid and reckless, as if he cared little what dangers might lie before him, or knowing, scorned them. A broad-brimmed sombrero effectually concealed his face from even the inquisitive rays of Mistress Moon. It was plainly evident that he desired to keep his features concealed. In the

midst of his wild gallop, the lonely traveler came to a halt, and so sudden was his bridle drawn taut that the noble horse, in the effort put forth to obey his master's will, was jerked almost upon his haunches. At this point the rocky road leading to the Gold Gulch was wild beyond description. Huge masses of rocks, upheaved by the giant hands of Nature, arose on every side, and formed natural walls, making a canyon out of the road, and down this the horseman had been galloping at headlong speed when brought to such a sudden halt by something white fastened to the trunk of a tree that had forced its way into existence in this barren spot. A square piece of paper was fastened to the trunk by four tacks. The lonely traveler, having brought his black steed to a pause, rode up close to the tree and bent over in the saddle, the better to examine what was written upon this singular placard, posted up in such a dismal place. He read the note through in a loud, clear, sneering voice, and this was what he deciphered:

"Notice!

"Five thousand dollars in gold will be promptly paid to any man who will secure, either dead or alive, the body of the road agent, Dare Devil Darrel, now in the neighborhood of this place. For further information apply to the vigilance Committees at any of the undersigned places.

"Green Horn Ranch.

"Get-up-and-Dust it Camp.

"Busted Flat.

"Blue Blazes Bar.

"Gold Gulch, and

"Drown-'em-out Creek."

When he read this placard through, the lone horseman broke out into a hearty laugh, that echoed in a ghastly fashion along the gully.

"The cursed cowardly hounds! They dare not seek for Darrel themselves, and take this means of having him slain, hoping some wandering hunter or traitor in my band will think themselves justified in disposing of me. As for my men, I know them well, and there is not one who would dare to raise a hand against his chief. The other danger I snap my finger at; and as for you, cowardly dogs, it is thus I defy you to do your worst."

The loud words had hardly left his mouth than the sharp, whip-like report of a rifle awoke the echoes of the gully, reverberating along the high cliffs until the sound was engulfed in the distance. Dare-Devil Darrel had in his delight at thus showing his contempt and defiance to the Regulators' placard raised his hat above his head. As the report sounded he heard, or fancied he heard, the peculiar zip of a bullet, passing by in close proximity to his head, and when he returned his hat there was a round hole through the crown. The unknown marksman took this means of letting the man with a price upon his head know that, had he so chosen, he might have earned the promised reward then and there.

Darrel vanished from view among the shadows that gathered in the gully some distance beyond. Three men crawled over the rocks and stood in the moonlight, one of them laughing im-

moderately, while the others seemed not a little amused. They were a quaint-looking trio, and the most singular-looking of the lot was the man who seemed so dreadfully tickled over something or other.

"Now suppose you explain matters, old horse. We are just dying to join in that laugh. Don't you agree with me, Bolly?" said the tall man.

"Tumble me inter the Colorado canyon if I don't now. Time was when I cud hold my own in findin' out a joke, but I candidly confess Bolly has got the deadwood on me this here time. I'm always ready to admit a fault; that's me, Roaring Ralph Rockwood, you bet."

Why, these are old friends! The moonlight is treacherous, but surely their features are familiar, and no one could mistake the old ranger from the Colorado canyon, with his queer phraseology. The powder-faced man could be no other than dashing Blue Bill, and the third of the party Pandy Ellis' equally renowned chum, Bolly Wherrit. Our old comrades are gathering in upon the gold mines; wherefore, the reader will discover in time. Bolly managed to recover his breath after he had had his laugh out, and not until then did he turn to his companions with an explanation.

"I didn't let ye shoot, boys, because the critter's time ain't come yet. Ye mustn't take the work outen Pandy's hands. It was rale comical, though, ter see the pesky imp a-bolting so sudden jest arter he had sworn thet he warn't askeer'd o' ther whole univarse. That was Darrel, and I'd just like to meet him."

"Ye'll hev a chance mighty soon then, old pard, for here they come," said Bill, quietly.

"Shoot me for a greaser if they ain't!" ejaculated Roaring Ralph, excitedly.

Down the gully the heavy pounding of many hoofs could be heard, rapidly drawing nearer. Evidently the prince of road agents had run across a band of his men not over half a mile away, and, fiery headed man that he was, determined to return and punish the bold fellows who had been the cause of his recent fight. The three hunter friends seemed nothing loth; indeed, their ready actions proclaimed that they rather enjoyed the prospect before them.

CHAPTER IV.—What Happened in "The Road to Ruin."

Gold Gulch at night. The darkness was dispelled by the light upon a dozen or more tents and shanties, and from these dens of iniquity floated the sounds of ribald laughter and loud voices. The Regulators of Gold Gulch were mythical as yet, and had any person come to claim the large reward offered for the apprehension of the famous road agent he would have found it a difficult job to have come across the Vigilantes.

Two gamblers sat at a table in a saloon called "The Road to Ruin." One was short, stout, and very swarthy. There was that about him that proclaimed the Spanish blood. He professed to be a Cuban, but there was one at least of those present who knew Senor Juan Gonzales as he was. The companion of the Spaniard was a handsome, fair-haired man, who did not look like a gambler,

and that was just where Burton Fairfax knew his power lay. He was a native of an eastern city, and had good family connections, but he had the good sense to change his name when he lowered himself to become a professional gambler. Standing in a corner where the light was rather dim might have been seen our old friend the ranger chief, but Pandy seemed to avoid attracting attention, for he kept his hat pulled down over his face, and as there were fully half a score of men in hunters' dress present, he succeeded in his desire. At length his attention was directed toward several new arrivals who had bustled in, and a look of surprise and pleasure shot athwart the old man's bronzed countenance, for he had recognized his chum, together with Roaring Ralph and Blue Bill.

These worthies were well known to many in the room, and soon a small party, that was being constantly augmented by fresh hearers, gathered around them. Pandy himself moved forward, although he still kept clear of the crowd. The rangers were telling the story of what they had seen in the gully, where the placard of the regulators had been nailed to the tree. All eyes were turned to one side of the saloon when this was mentioned, for a facsimile of the "proclamation" was there to be seen, fastened to the wall.

"Dare-Devil Darrel fears no one, they say, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised, providing he was around here, if he should step right up and do the same thig with that proclamation," said the Cuban gambler, pointing to the paper at the end of the room.

"Come now, pard, that's going too far, you know. Thar ain't a man in the world that would take such risks," said a brawny miner, who had just struck a pocket of pay-dirt and nuggets, and was considered "flush" by his friends.

"Santa Fe Joe, I'll tell you what you daren't do. Hang a purse of dust alongside of that card, and give the boys all notice that the man who steps up and takes it and proclaims himself Dare-Devil Darrel may accept it, providing he also takes the consequences, and I wouldn't be very much surprised if you should see the prince of road agents himself," said the dark-featured gambler significantly. The attention of every man in the long, low room was now directed toward Santa Fe Joe. That worthy walked slowly to the end of the room, and coming to a halt in front of the placard, faced the crowd. In one hand he carried a leather belt that appeared to be pretty well filled with dust; the other held a heavy six-shooter.

"Gents," said he, calmly, "I have expressed a doubt of this Dare-Devil Darrel's boldness, and I am about to give him a chance to prove it. If he is in the neighborhood, or any of his friends in the room, I invite them to step up and take this dust; only they must take the consequences at the same time. I shall let it hang there for twenty minutes."

A silence came over the room after the miner had spoken, every noise ceasing as if by magic. Men who had before been deeply interested in their games now arose and stood like figures of stone, gazing alternately first at the belt of gold dust that hung alongside of the placard on the further wall of the shanty, and then at the tall miner, who stood on the outskirts of the crowd,

his watch in one hand and the heavy weapon in the other. Thus five minutes passed away. A scornful smile began to play upon the features of the miner, who still maintained his post. There was a stir among the crowd; someone was pushing his way to the front. Old Pandy Ellis leaned forward; his eyes fell upon this person; it was a finely formed man with the heavy black beard, who had attracted his attention during the earlier part of the evening. Without betraying the slightest fear, the man strode across the clear space, up to where the belt hung in front of the placard. The miners drew long breaths as if conscious of the fact that they were about to witness the most daring piece of business that had ever been enacted in the camp. Bludsoe Baker was about to declare himself a member of Dare-Devil Darrel's road agents just for the sake of claiming the money belt, for of course he had no connection with the outlaws, and only desired to take up Santa Fe Joe's offer in the same spirit of bravado that it was made. Upon reaching the wall, Baker coolly took down the money belt, and strapped it about his waist, which act Santa Fe Joe watched without a muscle moving, for he was not the man to shoot an enemy in the back. Having fastened the belt, Baker drew out a short-bladed knife, not unlike a dirk, and raising his arm aloft, dashed it through the center of the placard, where it remained quivering from the force of the blow. Turning abruptly, the reckless man faced the amazed crowd, and in a clear voice, uttered the following startling words:

"Thus does the prince of the road bid you all defiance! I am Dare-Devil Darrel! Behold!"

CHAPTER V.—Roaring Ralph to the Rescue.

While this exciting scene was taking place in The Road to Ruin, other events of a nature equally as stirring were being enacted elsewhere. The young man who had come in the same stage-coach with the prairie prince, and had later on been rescued from the fury of the mob that had assailed him on account of his resemblance to Dare-Devil Darrel, so far as the miners could tell, as few of them had ever seen the face of the road agent—this young fellow was sauntering slowly along one of the streets some distance away from the large saloon. At this end of the camp the street was almost deserted, and as bad characters were very numerous in the gulch, Howard Lansing might have thought twice before venturing in this lonely quarter, had he been a lucky miner. A man with actually nothing in his pockets, for the road agent had generously relieved him of what little he had owned, had nothing to fear from footpads, to whom it must certainly be known that he was a "greenhorn," and hence destitute of gold dust. Two shadowy forms followed him silently, and with the cunning of red men. The young man was thinking of home and its dear associates, but presently his thoughts turned upon old Pandy Ellis, and the half-promise the trapper chief had made to assist him in his search for gold. The young fellow came to a halt, and was lost in deep meditation. Closer crept the two shadowy forms. One of them arose to his feet;

his arms were extended, and a ring of tough rope flew through the air. The noose settled over the young man's head, and by a sudden sharp pull, his arms were secured to his side, and himself tumbled over backwards. Before he could even collect his thoughts enough to utter a sound, the second man had sprang forward and clapped his hand over the mouth of the captive. When he was secured, the man lifted him up bodily and bore him into a neighboring cabin. He had ceased to struggle now that he saw something more than mere robbery was intended, and wondering what they were about to do with him, he allowed himself to be carried along. The two men laid him on the floor of the cabin, and then went out. Presently a slight rustling noise attracted his attention. The cabin was lighted up by a tallow dip that burned dimly upon an old table that could boast of only three legs, and had to be propped against the wall in order to stand. Some one had entered and closed the cabin door afterwards. Howard Lancing felt the presence of a human form near him, but his bonds had been fastened too securely to admit of his twisting his head. Then the person who had entered knelt down beside him, and the outlines of a face obtruded themselves upon his startled vision.

"Ha! So I have found you at last, Darrel Keene. Many weary months have passed since last we met, but I warrant me you do not forget the oath I made on the memorable night. I am here to fulfill it. You tremble, and you have cause to tremble, for Hattie Winchester shall be fully avenged. Do you hear, you monster?"

Young Lancing did hear, and what was more, he began to understand. The woman thought he trembled with fear, but it was another emotion altogether that shook his frame. The name that had fallen from her lips; it was that of his cousin, Darrel Keene, the man for whom he sought. Who Hattie Winchester was, he had not the remotest idea, nor did he attempt any speculation in this direction. The woman seemed to become possessed with an idea, for she began unfastening the cloth that concealed half of Howard's face.

"I have long prayed for this hour to come, Darrel Keene, and Heaven has at last listened to my prayer. You will not leave this cabin alive. Over Hattie Winchester's grave I took a solemn oath to hunt you to the death; I, a young girl, nurtured in luxury, knowing little or nothing of the sin of the world, I took the oath. Now, what have you to say?" and the cloth was removed.

"This, madam. You have secured the wrong man, I am sorry to say. I am not Darrel Keene; it was I who came in the coach with you."

A slight scream broke from her lips. She bent down closer.

"How could I have made such a mistake? Your face is too noble for such a man, and yet—and yet you resemble him some," she said, regretfully, as she hastened to cut his bonds.

"That is only natural, seeing that he is my cousin. I am seeking him as well as you, madam; there is an account to be settled between Darrel Keene and Howard Lancing. Thanks for delivering me from those cutting bonds; your fellows were not over particular in the way they fastened them, and I paid the penalty. What! Are you going, madam?"

"Yes; I owe you a thousand apologies for such a stupid blunder. We may meet again, and if not, you may remember me as—Grace Winchester."

"Grace Winchester," repeated the young man to himself, "where have I heard that name? Stay, I have it. Can it be she? I beg of you, madam——" but the other had gone; his ruse to detain her had failed.

Young Lancing rushed to the door and looked out, but not a soul was in sight.

Casting a glance around him, he strode down the street. Before he had gone twenty yards, young Lancing felt himself violently seized from behind, and once more he was powerless in the hands of two men. The lawless portion of the camp seemed to be fully alive on this night. These two men were busily engaged in rummaging his pockets in search of plunder, a process our young hero submitted to without any struggle, well knowing that if they could find anything there it would be doing much better than he himself was equal to, when one of the men gave utterance to an exclamation.

"It's him, Jack!" he exclaimed.

Howard smiled grimly, thinking of course the men had mistaken him for their chief, but he was speedily undeceived in regard to this. The other man also peered in his face, and then the two of them hustled him into a neighboring shanty. In this cabin were several men, who jumped to their feet as the trio entered. One of Howard's captors spoke a few words to a tall man, who at once came over to where he was standing. In this personage our hero recognized handsome Prince Charlie, the road-agent, who had so obligingly held the lantern while his chief interviewed the traveler in the overland from Green Horn Ranch.

"Are you Howard Lancing?" he asked.

"That is my name."

"You have a cousin, Darrel Keene?"

"I am ashamed to say I have."

Prince Charlie laughed at this. He was a fine-looking man, but devoid of principle.

"Then there is just this to be told. Darrel Keene knows of your presence in the camp, and he has determined to put an end to your hunt for him. Either swear to give up your idea of revenge upon him, or meet your fate like a man."

"So long as I live I shall hunt the dastard like a dog. I refuse to compromise."

"Enough. We never ask a man twice to save his own life. Men, up with the young dog."

Ready hands seized upon Howard Lancing, and he felt the rope put around his neck. He attempted to shout, but the words were choked in their utterance. Even as they pulled him from the ground, the crack of a rifle was heard, and the bullet severed the rope. At the same instant there was a wild war whoop, and Roaring Ralph Rockwood suddenly made his appearance in the shanty.

CHAPTER VI.—The Tiger from Blue Blazes Bar.

"I'm a terror! I'm Wildcat Saul, the Tiger, from Blue Blazes Bar. I kin lick my weight in bars or catamounts, or ten times it in human be-

ings. That's me now, you just plant your sheckels on it. Stranger, I'm awful when I get a little benzine in me. You run agin me in the public street, and that's an insult. No apology accepted; it kin only be wiped out in blood. I'm the great rooster of the Lucky Find Valley; you'll hear me crow arter I sit down on you. Wildcat Saul's my name, and I'm going to demolish ye."

"Andy Collins is my name, from New York, and you're going to do nothing of the kind, bet your boots on it now."

The scene was a striking one; if not, it threatened to be very shortly. Wildcat Saul was a perfect giant, with a form that might have served as a model for a Hercules. Andy Collins, as the other called himself, was a small man, slenderly built, but with muscles of steel. Wildcat Saul surveyed his small antagonist. He could admire impudence, but when addressed to himself it must be punished. As he saw the looks of amusement upon the faces of the miners who had gathered around, his anger arose until it rapidly grew near the boiling point.

"Critter, ye've riled me, and now ye must take the consequences. I'm going to demolish ye, an' when I'm done thar won't be enough of ye left to swab up a floor with. Ye waked up the wrong customer when ye poked at Wildcat Saul with a stick! Ah! Where are ye now," and he struck at the small man.

Those standing by could never really tell how it was done. They heard a loud thump followed by a heavy fall, and Wildcat Saul, the Tiger from Blue Blazes Bar, and the bully of all the mining camp, the man who had shot Old Leather-legs, the scout, and cowed Wild Bill, lay upon his back star-gazing. Something very like a cheer arose when this fact became apparent. The sound seemed to arouse the man from Blue Blazes Bar.

"Whar's the critter what struck me? Show me the reptile that got in that foul blow, and I'll chaw him into mincemeat."

"Hear's the man to whom you are indebted, my friend; Andy Collins, at your service," came in measured tones, unshaken by excitement.

Wildcat Saul turned with a furious roar—turned to find himself gazing into the tubes of a dangerous little sevenshooter, held by a hand that was as steady as the Rock of Gibraltar. It is wonderful to see the cooling effect a revolver will have at times upon the most reckless of men. Wildcat Saul had been in many a tussle where the odds seemed against him, but, like Wild Bill, he knew when a man "had the drop on him," and was no fool. The anger vanished from his face, and a sickly smile made its appearance.

"Fellers!" exclaimed Saul at length, uttering the words with a vehemence that made some of the more peaceably disposed miners shiver, "fellows, thar's going to be hot work around here before long. That man has taken advantage of me, and no critter ever did that before and lived. I'm a fire-eater, a tearer from Blue Blazes Bar, and I kin lick any man in this camp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ghastly laugh seemed to float upon the air, coming from whence, no one could tell.

"Who dares to laugh?" Saul cried, and the

faces around him expressed the greatest alarm and consternation. "Who dares to laugh at Wildcat Saul? If he be a brave man, let him step out and show himself. Thar's death in this weapon!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Rash mortal, dost think thou canst harm the dead? It is the spirit of old Dacotah Dave that haunts thee. The time draws near when his death shall be avenged, and thy neck be encircled by the bony, fleshless hand of death. Ha, ha, ha!"

The terrifying words and ghostly laughter seemed to come from the air above the man's head, and both were plainly heard by the awe-stricken crowd.

"Haunted—haunted! Saul Baker, haunted!"

The crowd was also somewhat horrified, and not desiring to hold any communication with the spirit of the ill-fated Dacotah Dave, the men hastened to disperse. One form arose from the grass just behind a neighboring shanty, and made off up the street, shaking with some deep emotion that must either be terror or secret laughter. He was a buckskin-clad warrior of the plains, tall and athletic, but his feelings made him shake like a reed in a storm.

"Slap my jaw with a bootjack! Dust my Sunday breeches, but that was better nor a circus!"

It was Roaring Ralph Rockwood, and he was personally acquainted with the spirit of Dacotah Dave.

CHAPTER VII.—"Halt, Right Thar!"

"Thus does the prince of road-agents bid you all defiance. I am Dare-Devil Darrel! Behold!"

Bludsoe Baker, the man with the black beard, uttered these words in a distinct voice, so that there was not a man present but who heard him. The man certainly made it plain enough for them, that was certain. As he uttered the last word, his hand sought his face, the heavy black beard was plucked loose and thrown aside, revealing the handsome features of Dare-Devil Darrel.

Santa Fe Joe's eyes fell upon the belt that was now strapped around the waist of the road-agent, and as he realized that he was in great danger of losing its precious contents, an inarticulate cry broke from his lips. Perhaps his eyes were blinded by passion, or else whisky. Certain it is that after his weapon had sounded, the road-agent was seen standing in the same position, only that one of his revolvers was raised. The breeze from the door blew the smoke to one side, and the unlucky miner realized his terrible position. A revolver was bearing full upon him. He had missed his aim; it was the other's turn now. As the sharp report rang out, Santa Fe gave a spasmodic leap into the air, and then sank to the floor a corpse; he had not been granted time enough to give a death shriek.

"Make way there! I am going out and woe to the man who attempts to stop me. My words contain information, these playthings, death!"

As he spoke, Dare-Devil Darrel left the wall against which he had been leaning, and moved toward the crowd.

"Halt right thar!"

The words sounded loud and clear, and Mr.

Road-Agent found his way blocked by a tall form garbed in greasy buckskin while a large revolver seemed to gaze into his face, as it were.

"Who are you that dares stop Dare-Devil Darrel?" he demanded in his fiercest tones.

"Pandy Ellis."

When the old hunter pronounced his name, the road-agent had naturally stepped back a pace; this was sufficient to give him the required momentum for the leap he contemplated. It so happened that one of the windows of the place was only a few yards to the left of the venturesome road-agent, and he had noticed that it was open. During the ten seconds that he stood before Pandy, he was concentrating his power for a tremendous leap. Suddenly he made the leap. It was a splendid jump and its executing did the man credit. He passed swiftly through the intervening space. Dare-Devil Darrel vanished through the window like an evil specter being swallowed up in the gloom without. All within the room heard the heavy thud as his feet struck the ground, and a rush was now made for the door. The shout of triumph that the road-agent had given utterance to, after the successful accomplishment of this feat, was suddenly choked off, for a pair of bony hands encircled his throat with the crushing power of a vise. In vain Dare-Devil Darrel struggled; he appeared to be in the power of a giant, whose will was law to him.

"Give us the critter to hang. We're the Vigilantes of Gold Gulch, an' won't be cheated out of our prey. Thar's going to be a dead man in these diggin's afore five minutes," came a voice.

"Eggsactly, an' thet dead man'll be you, ole hoss, ef ye dar ter poke yer nose forard. Show me ther man wat sed them words. Ef he ain't a cussed coward, he'll show hisself," said Pandy Ellis planting himself alongside of Bolly, in which maneuver he was followed by Blue Bill and Roaring Ralph. The valiant individual who had uttered those daring words did not exhibit any haste in showing himself, much to the amusement of old Roaring Ralph, who was chuckling to himself.

"Now," continued Pandy, "thar is jest this much ter be sed. This man air our prisoner. Ye stood thar like a pack o' cowards an' wud hev let him walk away arter shootin' yer kumrad. We captured him an' he belongs ter us. Now we want ter be friends wid ye all. I'm a-going ter help ye clean ther gulch out an' make it a respectable camp, whar a honest man kin sleep widout runnin' a chance o' walkin' up an' findin' his throat cut. In a word, ole Pandy Ellis air a-goin' ter lead ther Vigilantes."

Dare-Devil Darrel was turned over to several of the Regulators for safe-keeping.

Then the crowd separated, many of them going back to the tavern. Santa Fe's corps was removed, and the games, interrupted by his challenge, went on again. Pandy's comrades had left him alone; and he stood as before watching the wooing of the goddess of luck, and thinking of events long since past, when he heard his name spoken, and felt a touch on his arm. Turning his head, old Pandy found himself face to

face with a girl, who raised her finger, and uttered the one word:

"Danger!"

CHAPTER VIII.—The Cabin of Death.

When Roaring Ralph made his appearance so suddenly in the cabin where the little tragedy was being enacted in which our hero bore such a part, his appearance created something of a sensation, as may readily be believed. The bullet that he had fired so opportunely had cut the rope just above the head of the young man, who fell in a heap upon the floor, confused, but not badly injured. During the next five minutes Roaring Ralph Rockwood was fated to have one of the hardest tussles of his lifetime, but he was not the man to flinch from burnt powder or shining steel. Pandy had always likened him to the "awfulest, tarmekest piece o' recklessness extant, az ther feller hez it."

Bonny Prince Charlie commenced the affair by extinguishing the light in some mysterious manner with his foot. Complete darkness followed, the only things that could be seen being the little window and the open door. Perhaps ten seconds of this terrible silence ensued, a silence that was suggestive of the bloody events that were to speedily follow. Howard took advantage of this short interval. He was lying within half a dozen feet of the open door, and by rolling over he managed to make his egress. Hardly had he gone when a draught, blowing in at the window, caused the door to shut with a slam. The sound seemed to be the signal for the death struggle within to commence.

"On to him, men! cut the viper to pieces!" shouted Prince Charlie in a voice of rage. There was a rush of feet, several subdued oaths, one, two, three pistol shots in rapid succession, and then a confused shuffling sound, as if the whole of them were wrestling hand to hand. Outside, the young man arose to his feet, and stood listening in wonder. What could it all mean? Had someone come indeed to his assistance, and were they battling with the fiends inside. He could hear the quick percussion of blows, groans of agony, deep curses and growls, and several times a heavy fall, as some unlucky devil was knocked over in the melee. Whe darkness came so suddenly Ralph realized that he was about to be assaulted by the whole of his foes, and he had dropped his useless rifle, which could not be handled at such close quarters. In its place he drew his long, keen-edged bowie. What followed was terrible beyond description. Knife thrusts were given and received on both sides, and Ralph's long blade played havoc among his enemies. Pandy Ellis and a dozen men from the Road to Ruin, hearing the terrible racket, had now reached the spot. The noise of the struggle had now almost died away, although groans could be heard coming from the interior of the death cabin. A human figure came crashing all in his descent, and rolling over upon the ground. Before any of them could put forth a hand to arrest him, he had gathered himself up, and with great leaps plunged into the darkness.

nor did any of them fire, not knowing whether it was a friend or foe, and as for pursuit, that was rendered completely out of the question by the speed of the flying man. At this moment a man came from the saloon, bearing a lamp in his hand. The door, upon being tried, would not give way at first. There was evidently some heavy object against it on the inside, for when Pandy pushed hard he could feel it give way. Four men lay upon the floor, which was covered with human gore. Every one of these fellows was carved in an artistic fashion, the marks of a keen bowie knife being seen on all parts of their anatomy. A movement at the other end of the cabin now caught Pandy's eye, and even as he looked in that direction a horse voice said:

"Don't dar to raise a hand; I see ye, even if it is through the cussed blood! Not a move, now, or I'll let fly, knock me sky high with a ham bone if I don't! It's me as says it, Roaring Ralph Rockwood, you bet!" Then he came, having recognized his chum Pandy.

Roaring Ralph had as many as a dozen slashes in various parts of his anatomy, some of them ghastly, although not dangerous cuts. Our friends had just left the cabin containing the four dead men, and were heading for the Road to Ruin, when a man came rushing in their direction, shouting hoarsely the words:

"Dare-Devil Darrel has escaped!"

CHAPTER IX.—Andy Collins the New York Detective.

When Andy Collins left the infuriated Tiger from Blue Blazes Bar, he made his way through the crowd that was gathering, and vanished in the darkness, as has been said before. Some five minutes later the strange little man sauntered into the Golden Nugget, which was the best hostelry in town. Here the travelers by the stage usually put up on their first arrival. He wrote a few words on a card, and had this sent upstairs by Gretchen, the landlord's rosy-cheeked little girl, who came down a minute later, and beckoned him to follow her. The man of nerve, as Collins might well be called, was ushered into a room finely furnished, but his eyes fell not on the furniture, but on the occupant of the apartment. A young girl sat in an easy-chair, looking like an angel, as Andy said mentally.

"You have come on the day you said you would, miss. Welcome to Gold Gulch," and Andy accepted the hand offered him.

"Oh, Mr. Collins, I am so glad to see you. Tell me, is he here?" she asked, eagerly.

"I am glad to say he is, miss."

"Oh, then I may see him, may I not?" she exclaimed, clasping her hands in delight.

"My dear Miss Courcy, you shall see him to-morrow from your window. If he does not walk past of his own will, I shall get him to. Trust an old friend like Andy Collins to do you a service in the time of need. I told you once that I wouldn't do anything in the world for you, and now I am proving it by working for you and my successful rival. I told you Howard was here, but

there is other news, which if not quite so interesting to your loving heart, is pleasing to my professional one."

"What is it?" she asked, quickly, her dazzling blue eyes lighting up with affection.

"Darrel Keene is in this vicinity."

The young girl uttered a sudden cry in which both satisfaction and fear might have been traced.

"He hates Howard. Are you sure he has done him no injury?" she asked, anxiously.

"I saw the young man this evening, and up to that time he had not been harmed. I hardly think Darrel Keene will attempt to injure him."

"I hope not, but you don't know him as I do, Mr. Collins."

"I will leave you now, Miss Belle. Keep a lookout from your window to-morrow, and you may see your lover. Good-night," and the little detective left the room in the same quiet way that seemed to characterize all of his movements. Ten minutes later he was among the crowd that gathered near the cabin of death, where old Pandy was standing with arm locked in that of the fire-eater, Roaring Ralph, but not even his own mother would have recognized Andy Collins, such was the effectual nature of the disguise he had assumed. A minute later came the dread tidings that Dare-Devil Darrel had escaped. Even Roaring Ralph forgot his wounds, and joined in the mad rush toward the prison.

"Thar air more o' ther pizen critters in ther camp. Bust my moccasins ef I ever seen ther beat. Sumpin's got ter be done hyar, 'less ye want 'em ter manage ther place. Gentlemen, air ye ready for work?" cried Pandy, turning to several of the leading regulators, who had followed him into the room.

"We are," they replied firmly.

"Then, sirs, to-morry'll see a revolution in Gold Gulch. Pandy Ellis'll lead ye, an' arter givin' ther gamblers, thieves an' cut-throats generally, fair warnin', ef thar's one o' 'em, he be found at night, we'll string him up higher nor Heman, az ther feller sez."

The next day a great battle was fought between the Regulators, under the leadership of Pandy Ellis, and the gamblers under the leadership of Wildcat Saul, the Tiger, and the latter had been wiped off the face of the earth. It had been suspected from the first that Wildcat Saul was in league with the roadagents.

CHAPTER X.—The Specter Horsemen.

After the great battle was over, and victory declared in favor of the regulators, joy reigned in the camp. It was not unaccompanied by sorrow, however, for many of the brave men had kept company with desperadoes in death, and the cemetery on the hillside would soon be increased to respectable proportions. The dead were laid out in a couple of the cabins, and their comrades determined to have a genuine wake. Pandy Ellis and his friends were also not a little amused, and they stopped to witness the strange event.

recede took place from the scene of the late festivities.

Blue Bill came to an abrupt pause in his Spanish dance, and joined in the mad rush toward the center of the camp. Men who had never been known as valiant now led the crowd, for the accumulation of months of weary labor was threatened with danger. Threatened! It was a wild-eyed crowd that gathered around the bank building. A dozen torches threw a ruddy light upon them, but bronzed faces had actually turned pale. A groan went up when it was discovered that the door of the little blockhouse, in spite of its heavy padlock, was wide open, and across it lay the body of the faithful guard, who had met his death in defense of his charge. Then the silence of death followed while Judge Breckinbridge and Pandy Ellis stepped over the dead guard and entered the bank. Before a minute had gone by, they once more made their appearance, and the murmur that had been rising died away until all was still again.

"My good friends," said the judge, in a loud voice, "I have very painful news to tell you. Our bank has been entered by these blessed"—only he did not quite say blessed—"road-agents, and they have gutted the strong chest. There ain't an ounce of dust left in the building."

Then the curses that arose were perfectly terrible, and it was a wonder that the air did not smell of sulphur. Men looked at each other with wolfish eyes, and it seemed that a terrible crisis was impending. There is no telling what they might have done in the fullness of their sudden rage, but it happened that there was a man among them keen enough to know just what they needed, and brave enough to tell them so. That man was Pandy Ellis. Climbing upon the top of the bank, he drew the attention of the crowd of miners. Pandy was a man of few words, little given to making speeches, but when he said a thing he meant it.

"Boys," said he impressively, "I hev no interest in this yar matter except that ye air all my friends, but I'm goin' ter be wid ye ter ther death; do 'e hear, ter ther death. Them critters must be wiped out—exterminated."

"Them's the ticket!" cried the crowd.

"An' I'm ther exterminator."

"You bet, old Pandy!" they shouted.

CHAPTER XII.—Ralph Tussles with Old Nick.

Yes, Howard Lancing had been captured by his cousin, Dare-Devil Darrel and had been put into an underground passage. Howard lighted a match and discovered a torch lying on the ground, which he lit. No sooner than the gloom was dispelled before he was appalled by seeing a horrible looking thing, half dragon, approaching him, uttering ear-piercing roars as it advanced. It advanced a few paces and then drew back, only to advance again, drawing a little nearer each time. Howard had only a knife with which to defend himself.

Howard stood there almost frozen with the feeling that appeared to creep along and benumb his limbs. To cry out would do not a particle of good; retreat he could not, and dash out his torch

he dare not, so that all that was left for him to do was to stand against the rock, and summoning all of his courage to his aid, fight the horrible thing to the last gasp. He had need of all his determination to preserve a brave front, for with each advance the roars of the strange brute grew louder, and its aspect became still more horrible, if such a thing were possible. Things could not remain in this way long. So nervous had the young man become that if the fierce brute did not assault him shortly, in sheer desperation he would move toward it, and hasten the conflict that could only terminate in the catastrophe of death.

He was spared this daring act, however, for a most singular event took place. The dragon, after the fiercest demonstration it had yet made, slowly retired in order to prepare probably for the final rush. Howard stood there, torch in hand, and peering through the darkness to where he could see the ferocious fiend. At this instant there was a loud exclamation in a human voice. He heard the scrambling sound of a fall, and knew immediately afterward that some one had engaged the thing in a desperate fight. Who this unknown friend could be, or from whence he came, Howard had not the slightest idea, but he was no coward, and at once rushed toward the combatants. Contrary to his expectation he did not hear the fiend indulge in horrid roars. On the contrary, the only sound that greeted his ears as his torch lighted up the scene of the conflict, other than those caused by the struggle itself, was the voice of a man yelling out in wild accents the strangely familiar exclamations:

"Dust my Sunday breeches; far and feather me! Chaw my moccasins; bust me, what under the hevings has got hold of me? Air it the devil?"

The new antagonist of the thing was no other than our friend Roaring Ralph.

The dragon at once seized upon the reckless ranger, who, feeling the slimy skin against his own, gave vent to his amazement and consternation in several of the phrases that had become a part and parcel of Roaring Ralph. Desperate as his situation might be, the rough ranger was not the man to ever give in without a struggle. What horrible denizen of the underground world embraced him he knew not, but without stopping to give the matter a second thought he pitched in. Roaring Ralph we have all seen in many perilous scenes, but certainly never one like this. The night had already held strange adventures for him, but it seemed that he was destined to go through with more of a character equally as exciting.

Howard recognized the expressions used by the reckless old ranger more than his voice itself, for the scrambling, shuffling noise that sounded as if two persons were engaged in mortal combat almost effectually drowned anything familiar in his tones. The young fellow rushed impetuously forward. He still held the lighted torch above his head, and with his right hand gripped the knife that had come into his possession so providentially, determined that as Roaring Ralph was his friend, and had fought hard for him once before, he would not be backward about lending his assistance in the present struggle, even though both of them were obliged to succumb to the

power of the terrible winged dragon of the cavern. When the light from Howard's torch first lit the spot, it showed him a scene of the greatest confusion. One of the great wings of the dragon seemed to be embracing the leather-clad ranger, who, unable to draw a weapon, was struggling vainly at the shining body of the horrible reptile with his fists after the manner of a worn pugilist.

Howard, seeing the danger of his friend, now waited for a chance to plunge his knife into the creature. One of Roaring Ralph's heavy blows appeared to strike in some point more vulnerable than the rest and with the astonishing result of the terrible-looking creature rolling over upon the ground. Howard was about to spring forward with his knife to inflict some damage, when the prostrate monster cried out, in a loud voice:

"I own up best, boys!"

CHAPTER XIII.—Scarlet Loon's Dusky Hunters.

A few nights after the foregoing events transpired—a very dark night—a figure was making his way along toward some objective point evidently, although if anyone were around and had seen him it would have puzzled him what the objective point was.

Trace out the course he had been taking since our last meeting and you directed to his movements and there the object of interest was to be seen. A light that flickered in an uncertain way, as though proceeding from a fire, showed the naked branches of an old dead tree that seemed to have over the spot from whence the glare emanated. With great hesitancy the man kept on his way, gradually reaching the spot from whence the light came. Sounds now reached his ears, not unlike the murmur of human voices, and a dry chuckle escaped his lips as if some suspicion previously entertained had now become a certainty.

It turned out just as he had suspected. The fire lay in a ravine some twelve feet or more in depth, and the sides of which in some places were covered by a wall of rock, such was their steepness. The crawler slowly approached at the point where the dead tree leaned far out over the ravine. At this point a ragged fringe of dried grass, growing along the edge, which waved restlessly either from the heat of the fire below, or because a slight wind blew through it at intervals. Like a snake the spy moved toward the edge. He lay flat upon his breast, and wriggled along a few inches at a time, as if an old hand at this sort of business, and not likely to betray himself to those in the little canyon below.

Reaching the edge of the wall, his movements grew ever more cautious, if such a thing were possible. The pungent smoke of the fire assailed his nostrils, and he knew, even before looking over, that it was almost directly under him. Placing one hand upon the trunk of the dead tree, so that it might bear a portion of his weight, he leaned over. What he saw brought an ejaculation of

surprise to the lips of the spy, but he refrained from giving utterance to it. The fire was burning briskly in the little canyon, and around it, seated or standing as they might happen to be, were at least two score of hostile Sioux braves. That they were on the warpath it needed no second glance to tell the crawler upon the bank, for his eyes noted this like a flash. Having gained a good position for observation, the white spy craned his neck over the edge and began to count the redskins in the canyon below. While doing this he was exceedingly careful not to discover himself to any of them. He knew as well as any man on the border what sharp eyes are possessed by Indians, and how ready they are to note anything suspicious, and he was resolved that by no act of his should discovery come. A creeping form came snakelike over the ground in his rear, making not the slightest sound that could have reached mortal ears.

The scout leaned still farther over the edge, supporting himself by the toes, and so deeply interested in examining the camp and its inmates, that he knew nothing of the silent foe behind him. At length the dusky brave arose to his knees. He held no weapon in his hands, and it seemed as though it was his intention to throw himself upon the recumbent form of the spy and pin him to the earth. Such was not his idea, however, as the events of the next few seconds proved. Suddenly grasping the ankles of the scout, he gave them a desperate twist. So abrupt was this assault that the white spy was thrown from the wall. Instinctively he retained his hold upon the tree, and thus found himself in a singular position. Swinging by one arm from the dead tree, a savage above him, tomahawk in hand, a campfire and two score of Sioux below him! Truly, old Pandey Ellis was not to be envied.

Soon Pandey let himself fall from the limb of the tree right among the redskins. But just as the Indians were swarming to annihilate the old scout a volley of rifle shots rang out, and the Regulators, led by Bolly Wherrit, who had been scouting around the Indian camp, attacked the redskins and put them to rout. And now a scout approached and said he had discovered the robbers' retreat.

CHAPTER XIV.—Moccasin Mat.

To say that Roaring Ralph and Howard, having been captured by the redskins, were in a state of great distress, would be like saying that the sun was hot. It was a fact, and Howard had been forced into it by his captives (men), addressed them in a voice that although sounding a trifle rusty, as if from long dwelling in this strange place, was unmistakably human; I say to declare that they were amazed would be putting it mildly. Slowly a human form emerged from the dragon skin, kicking first one leg loose and then the other, and at length standing erect before the two friends. It was a good-looking man who met their gaze. He was young in years, and his face was remarkably handsome with its golden-colored beard. His hair, of the same

elder, hung far down upon his shoulders. A pair of young eyes looked keenly at our two friends, who were so strangely marked that neither of them could be a Jew. The late terrible wizard declared that to break the strange magic that had fallen upon them.

"You're a nigger," said he to the reckless rascal, "I've never seen ye before, but I want to know ye. I shay, ye've come in here in a hurry, but I've got enough my order. Ye don't belong to the carnival in this party place that ain't got no outlet; ye look like a live 'rapper; tell me who ye are?"

"I'll be a good old miner, w' a low reputation for a miner's claws an' leather boots! I'm a fine-tail'd miner from the Colorado canyon; I'm the squarer who can bet his weight in silver with an ounce. That's me, now, Raring Ralph Rockwood, you bet."

"I told you I was right, wasn't I?"

"What's that and where are it? Hoo-gah! Mat, did ye
say? Great! no and order, what! Won't I ally be
"I'll go to the bottom of the river," said he, up for
this part of the history in search of ye, man.
"But only that we might be here, no. Great put-
ting it off on our own of that be it to Devil! Barrell's
best, we'll, set he, that's the only man what
knows what my young friend Anacaula Mat are."

"Laven Bare-devil Darrel don't know, but he thinks I have come to the spirit world. Who is the wife the torch, Rearing Ralph?"

Then for the first time the eyes of the rough ranger fell upon Howard Lancing, and with an ejaculation of joyful surprise, he seized upon the young man's hand. While Moccasin Mat was gathering together the ludicrous disguise in which he had really alarmed both of our friends, Rabin and Howard were entering into mutual explanations, and the mystery, so far as it might have existed between them, was dissipated. Moccasin Mat had left Bolly Wherrit some six months or more before. His object in coming to the gold hills was well known to the old ranger, which accounted for the ready manner in which he laid the blame upon Dave-Devil Darrel when he came to the Black Hills in search of his missing friend and comrade.

There was an old score between Darrel Keene and Mat Reynolds. Down in the southwest they had met as enemies, and fought more than once but without fatal results. The girl whom Mat loved had vanished from her native town, and it was generally held that Darrel Keene had been concerned in her disappearance, as he vanished at the same time. Although Mat had reached high rank in the army, and, besides, wearing a cross, he had fought for the good cause, he regretted if he could find Darrel Keene, to show him an opportunity that he had done with John Adams. He was now busy enough by leading the regiment on the march.

The next day I called on K. and, at his place
 we got a look at the collection. They were, for the
 most part, the same as those at the time, except
 that the *Chalcid* had been lost, but the *Stenobothrus*
 was still there, as were the other, but I don't
 know how the collector's old friend, and would
 have been a very valuable source, but the lat-

for spring at him like a wildcat, demanding to know what he had done with her. "What?" George declared he had never set eyes on her since the girl stole her tin, and that he never had no desire to see her, but the people of the village, or him, directly gave him the lie, and at that they went, hammer and tongs.

Darrel Keene was a stronger man, but he was so injured by the blows of his captors that he was nearly dead, when, fortunately for him, some of his road agents happened along, attracted by the noise of the fray, and freed him from his captor. Darrel Keene was now furiously angry. He had his victim thrown into the Black Pit, and left there to starve. Two months later he returned, and no amount of courage to go to the bottom of the bones of his enemy, but not a word of grace could he give. And yet, somehow, he had climbed out of the Black Pit, nor had a single man of the outfit visited him.

Barrel Keene had felt uneasy ever since; something seemed to tell him that his enemy was still alive and near him; how near he had not the least idea, and would have shuddered had he known that fifty times over he had been nearly smothered in the folds of Hecate's skin. The escape of the hunter from the pit was a very simple one, although it took him many weary hours to accomplish it. A hollow sound under his feet gave him the idea, and he set to work with a small penknife he had. In the end he made his way along the cavern where we have seen the meeting between himself, Howard and Roaring Ralph some six months later.

From this he could gain access to the storeroom of the road agents, and supplied himself with everything he needed, but could find no way of getting out. The only passage leading to the outer world was barred by a heavy door, and the key of this was hung up in the main cave in plain view of those who might be therein. Many had been the tricks and plans resorted to by the imprisoned hunter to gain possession of this key, but all without success. He had paid a visit to the Black Pit, and removed all traces of the manner in which he had made his escape. In despair, he had at length attempted to bribe the outlaws, and had made up the dragon out of various articles stolen from the storeroom. Several times he had given them a bad scare, the bullets fired at him being wasted on account of his wearing an armor made of many sheets of thick brown paper, and the outlaws had begun to believe in the phantom hunter.

Moccasin Hat prepared to lead them to where they could look upon the main eastern occupied by the road agents, and to this they readily assented. The middle runner knew nothing at all about the place, however, even though the road and Howard was, but the latter explained that the place would recognize the place where the head had been removed from his eye, and he had told his angry, determined crew. The main runner, on the other hand, knew the place, and he pointed off the highway, and the three in the lead and middle riders, so long, smiling at the road agent, to see if he, from the store, would be in. After traveling a distance of about a mile, the three had reached upon the road, being engaged at the corner, as there was no corner for a mile, but a portion of the

cavern, they came to the storeroom of the road agents. Here a lantern, burning dimly, revealed quite an array of boxes and barrels, together with sundry packages, and it was evident that once in a while the border robbers pounced upon a provision merchant's train bound for the gold hills, which stock was soon after added to their larder.

This cavern was also used as a stable, for a dozen or so horses were fastened at the other end, where they champed and pawed at the rock as if anxious to see the outside air again. Moccasin Mat left his new-found friends, and gliding through the storeroom, entered quite a large passage on the other side. In a few minutes he came back, and reporting the coast clear, led them along the route he had just taken. Before a couple of minutes had gone by they were looking in upon the cavern home of Dare-Devil Darrel and his bold road-agents. The cavern was large and well-lighted up. Half a dozen men were in sight, and these seemed to be wrapped in sound slumber.

Moccasin Mat pointed to the further wall, where in plain view hung the key that unlocked the heavy door standing between themselves and freedom. Time and again had the eyes of the poor prisoner rested longingly upon this, and now he had friends by his side who would assist him to force an egress from the underground abode that had threatened to be his tomb. At this minute the rough ranger caught the arms of his comrades, and ejaculated in a whisper:

"Dust my Sunday breeches; look thar!"

What they saw was the figure of a woman approach a man who evidently was asleep, and press a handkerchief to his face as though chloroforming him. Howard saw it was the veiled woman who was with him in the coach—Hattie Winchester.

But now the three friends were aware that somebody was coming. They scurried to get back beyond the storehouse. But in the scramble Raring Ralph was left behind among an immense heap of boxes. He did not know which way to go.

CHAPTER XV.—On the Brink of Eternity.

Not a human being was in sight. Some thirty yards ahead a lighted torch was to be seen. It swung by means of a cord, and moved to and fro with a pendulum-like motion, as though it had been recently moved. Why it had been placed in this strange position not one of them could guess, but they were not long kept in ignorance. Once more the gruff voice of Prince Charlie came to them, every word being clear and distinct as the notes of a bell.

"Advance ten steps more and you will all be added into eternity. There is a keg of gunpowder, and a train lies under the torch. If you move forward you will send us all to the devil. Be warned in time, and get out of this."

Pandy Ellis arose to his feet. He held a heavy revolver in his hand, and those nearest to him saw a strange light come upon his face, that was almost cowering in its way.

"Foller me," he shouted, and then bounded for-

ward like a panther in the direction of the swinging, lighted torch.

Was the old ranger mad? If so, there was a method in his madness, as will be presently made manifest. Sure enough, the words of the road agent seemed about to be made true. Before Pandy Ellis had made five of his leaps, the torch fell abruptly to the rocky floor, the old ranger having run against a thread stretched across the passage, and which was connected with the cord that maintained the torch. No sooner had the light reached the floor of the passage than there was a confused spluttering sound, a myriad of sparks, and as Prince Charlie had threatened, the train was fired.

There was a bright flash as the fire reached the keg, and then but for the fluttering torch upon the rocks, darkness fell upon the scene. The old hero had not paused, even when the vivid flash, leaping up, seemed to threaten the terrible disaster the road-agent had promised. He had almost unconsciously shut his eyes and clenched his teeth, but if he was preparing for a shock, none such came, and as almost complete darkness came upon the scene, he leaped over the torch. A few seconds later and the plain sounds of battle reached the ears of our friends. Angry curses, followed by a yell of pain, and a wild whoop in the well-known voice of the old ranger, roused the stupefied regulators to the astonishing fact that they were still in the land of the living.

"Forward! The ole man's gone an' tackled the whole gang. Forward!" yelled Bolly.

They raced along like so many fierce panthers. In passing, Blue Bill swooped down, and picking up the torch, waved it wildly above his head as he ran, fanning it into a brilliant flame. They turned the angle that was just a short distance in the rear of the empty powder keg that had been about to blow them all into eternity. It was a wild scene that met their gaze. Pandy Ellis stood in the midst of a dozen road agents, his knife drawn, and already crimson with the life blood of one of them. As the wild band of regulators dashed into view, bearing the torch, the road-agents seemed to vanish into thin air; but Pandy had seized upon one fellow, whom he was hugging desperately with brotherly affection, when his friends reached the spot.

Comanche Jack, who had given up his position as coach driver, and accompanied his old prairie friends, relieved Pandy of his prisoner, and the indomitable old fellow immediately dashed off at the head of the regulators, who, now that the horrible suspense of the last minute was broken, were ready and anxious to be at their enemies. They did not go far, however. A deadly fire met them that laid several brave men low, and the others, still dashing valiantly on in the darkness (for no sooner had the music of deadly weapons commenced, than Blue Bill dashed the torch away), ran against a barricade built of rocks. As it was impossible to look this down in the face of the galling fire from the other side, or clamber over it, if such a thing was within the possibilities at any time, the regulators retreated behind the adjacent bend in the passage, and proceeded to discuss the matter in all its bearings. While they are thus engaged, we can do no better than take a little retrospective glance

and ascertain how this condition of affairs came about.

The secret, who came rushing into camp just after the Insectahs had been almost exterminated, and indeed found the main entrance to the road agents' den, and he did not consume very much time in calling old Pandy and his men thither. They had to move cautiously, as they were going over mines in ground. Being discovered by a road-agent without their knowledge, the alarm was given, and a reception for the Vigilants prepared, as the reader has seen, although it was not quite so warm as the inmates of the Pandah's Hole had tried to make out. But for the intrepid nature of fellows Pandy Ellis, the cunning road-agent would in all probability have driven the regulators out of the cavern by fright alone. Let us now return to other of our characters, whom we left, some time back, in rather a critical situation, and ascertain how they have fared during all this time of tumult.

CHAPTER XVI.—Old Dragon Goes Up in Smoke.

Moccasin Mat and Howard Lancing crouched behind an outlying boulder in the narrow passage that led to the interior cavern. Around them all was gloomy darkness, and silence brooded among the black depths in their rear.

"Ready! They are close at hand," said the young hunter to his comrade.

Loud voices and heavy footfalls could be heard in front, and a light suddenly greeted their eyes as those who approached came suddenly around some bend in the passage. Howard had been well armed by Mat, who had secured almost everything he desired from among the stores of the road-agents, and the two presented quite a formidable appearance. Ignorant of the grisly monster that lay in the path, the outlaws advanced in single file. The leading man carried a torch, and thus presented a splendid mark. As Mat's revolver rang out, he gave an eldritch screech, flung the fatal torch to one side, and then pitched forward upon his face, as dead as Julius Caesar.

Darkness now ensued, and Howard, to complete the confusion, sent several bullets along the narrow alley, and the angry shouts, together with the yells of pain, gave evidence of the fact that in some way or other they had proved efficacious, although not to the outlaws. A long silence ensued; perhaps half an hour elapsed, and our two friends knew their foes had gone back to the other cavern for a consultation. Howard's thoughts were roaming to other scenes, and the sweet, lovely face of Belle Courcy was before his mind's eye, when he felt the hand of his companion laid upon his arm.

"Hist! they are coming again," said Mat.

Howard also heard the slight noise in the narrow alley, as if some crawling person had run against one of the bodies. It would be extremely difficult to see where to fire, but Mat prevented his companion from doing this. He held something in his hand which he seemed to weigh carefully, as if about to throw it from him.

"Flatten yourself out on the ground," he said. "There's going to be a rumpus."

Howard had hardly done so than he knew Mat had sent whatever he held along the narrow passage, and thrown himself also upon the floor. There followed a bright flash and a terrific explosion that seemed to make the walls tremble. As soon as the rolling of stones ceased, silence followed in their immediate vicinity, but they could hear the cries of alarm, and the shuffling noise of a hasty retreat from those who had been farther away, and hence uninjured by the explosion of Moccasin Mat's little hand grenade.

"Reckon they won't come fooling about our front door again. If we were only as safe in regard to the rear, we'd be all right. Tell you what, I'll go and fix up the dragon. That may scare 'em some if they get in; at least they'll make a noise and give us time to be on our guard. I've a way of making the old thing work by itself for hours, all but the yells."

Mat came back after a little and declared with a chuckle that the green dragon was ramming all around the cavern in search of prey. The road-agents were sharper than our friends had given them credit for. Howard Lancing had been recognized by the man who had been in the stable cavern when the two men rushed into the narrow passage, and the question at once arose, how had he escaped from the pit?

Dare-Devil Darrel set an investigation on foot immediately, and the result of their researches was the discovery of the passage through which Moccasin Mat and Howard had made their escape. When they reached the pit and found it empty, they began to suspect treachery on the part of some one in the band, but a close examination showed them the trap-door leading to the passage below. Then the whole affair was made as plain as daylight to Darrel Keene, and he shuddered to think that his mortal foe, Moccasin Mat, had been alive and close to him for months back.

Several of the men proceeded to dress themselves so as to be almost impervious to bullets, as they had seen the danger of carrying a torch while hunting such desperate men. One of them wrapped a great many blankets around his person so that he had the appearance of a stuffed sausage. This individual, who, only after a squeeze, managed to get through the trap door, was immediately dubbed the "Living Skeleton" by his comrade. He was deputed to be one of the torch-bearers.

The other worthy who was chosen for this dangerous and anything but lucrative office was a tall, thin fellow, who had picked up a complete suit of ancient armor somewhere, probably stealing it from some museum. Incased in this, he presented a formidable appearance, but walked very clumsily, as it was tremendously heavy. They were compelled to lower him into the pit with a rope.

When the road-agents marched along the underground passage with these two queer-looking objects at their head, they presented a strange appearance, but the torch-bearers felt that they were safe, at all events. They at length reached the end of the passage, and came upon the cavern where our two friends had taken up their quarters. No sooner had they reached this point than the man swaddled up in blankets gave a sudden screech.

"Thar comes that big green devil after us. Run, boys, get out of this quick! Thunder! it's got me; I'm a goner!" he yelled.

The man in the armor tried to turn and run, but either he could not see well, on account of the steel visor, or else his head was too eager to go ahead. At any rate, he tripped and fell, rolling slowly down the incline toward the terrible demon, in spite of his efforts to stop. His horrified companions watched his progress with distended eyes. Once more the green monster came rushing forward. The man wrapped up in blankets, finding the passage choked with his friends, and thinking his time had come, uttered a howl of terror, and flung his torch at the dragon just as his fiery tongue seemed to dart out at the helpless ancient knight upon the ground.

The torch lodged on the great head of the monster. The effect was marvelously magical. Bright tongues of flame shot upward with almost lightning-like rapidity, and in an incredibly short space of time the green-winged monster had vanished into nothing, and all that was left to mark its late presence was a mass of smoldering cloth on the ground, and several blazing ropes that hung from some place above, swinging in mid-air.

"Good-by, old dragon," shouted a voice, "and look out for cold lead, my hearties."

Although amazed at what had taken place, the road-agents readily understood that the terrible winged dragon that had frightened several of them almost into convulsions at various times, was a gigantic hoax perpetrated at their expense by the hunter who had escaped from Black Pit months before, but who it seemed had found no opportunity to leave the den. Before they could put their knowledge to any practical use, and while they still stood like statues, there was a loud crack, as though the rocks were being rent asunder, and a bullet came tearing through their midst.

This aroused them as nothing else would have done, and there was a scattering in hot haste as the bullets began to fly. The only light our two friends had to aim by proceeded from the half-extinguished torches lying upon the rocks, and the still burning ropes. By plunging hither and thither, the outlaws managed to get beyond the radius of this light, and consequently in comparative safe quarters, as far as the leaden missiles of their enemies were concerned. During the brief interval, several shots had sounded, and a couple of the outlaws lamented wounds that were the result of exposing themselves.

"It's coming, Lancing," muttered Mat.

"What do you mean?"

"The tug of war. They're in this place with us now, and I don't see how we can retreat. Let's change our positions, anyhow! Follow!"

Mat had led his young friend to a point where the rough wall presented a chance for an ascent, and up they went like two chamois, making as little noise as possible. Mat was in the advance, and had reached a considerable height, when he became conscious of something breathing on his face. At the same instant, in almost a whisper, there came the strange but well-known words:

"Dust my Sunday breeches! What hev we hyar?"

CHAPTER XVII.—Mocked by the Dead.

When Roaring Ralph found that he could not follow his friends because he had become lost in the different passages among the boxes, etc., in the store-room of the road-agents, he settled down in a niche between a couple of high piles of merchandise. He had no more than settled down, however, before a voice uttered the word "Well!"

Roaring Ralph attempted to pull his gun, when the voice again spoke:

"Hold on a bit, my friend. I know who you are, and that you would not hesitate to rush on me even now, but it would be a foolish move. Let us act in concert. I am with these outlaws, but for a purpose. Perhaps you saw me at Gold Gulch."

"Yes, I know ye now by what ye say, an' by yer voice, but dust my Sunday breeches, yer get-up are amazin' good. I war jest goin' ter ram inter ye fur a bloody road-agent, h'ist me inter a 'Pache grave if I warn't. Guv us yer hand, Andy Collins of New York!"

The two shook hands as though the meeting had occurred on Broadway. Then the detective, in hurried tones, told him how he came to be in this serpent's den. He had joined the survivors of Wildcat Saul's gang in their flight from Gold Gulch, had been with the party that robbed the bank, and enjoyed it, too, all but where the guard was killed, "for the fools needed such a lesson to make 'em keep their eyes open," Andy declared.

It was he who had dropped a knife down to Howard in the pit when captured. Roaring Ralph had in his turn started to explain the singular events that had culminated in his bringing up within the cavern, when the little detective gave a sudden start, cocked his head on one side as though listening, and then caught the rough ranger by his sleeve.

"Hist! they come. After me, quick!"

Roaring Ralph lost no time in following where the other led. Ten seconds was sufficient for them to leave the cavern, and by clambering quickly up the wall, plunge into a hole which the little detective seemed to have taken note of before. Their quarters were close, but it was at least a hiding place for the time being from the eyes of the road-agents, and from their post of observation they could observe all that passed within the stable cavern. Half a dozen men came hurrying into view, dashing off again almost immediately down one of the passages. Barrel Keene remained standing alone in the cavern, as if wrapped in perplexing thought.

"What a glorious opportunity to accomplish my mission if I was only down there!" whispered the little detective, with a groan.

"Hev ye sworn ter kill him, too? Dust my Sunday-go-to-meetin' breeches, but thar's a wheen o' folks arter his life," said Ralph.

"My mission is to make a prisoner of him, so as to force a confession from him. Look, what does he see?" said Andy Collins, pointing.

The prince of road-agents had given a sudden start, and they saw him look keenly at the opposite side of the cavern. Naturally their eyes were also attracted in that direction. A form, dimly seen, stood near the wall. To Andy Col-

lins it was strange, but Roaring Ralph recognized the female who had appeared in the cavern some time before, raising Dare-Devil Darrel's mask in order to see the face behind it, and whose face had caused handsome Moccasin Mat such a shock. As the sable figure, with its white face and uplifted arm, still approached him, he gave a terrible curse, and vanished from view down one of the passages.

"Let us see where this place leads to," said Andy Collins at length. "for we have little chance of getting out through the cavern here, with those fellows dashing constantly through it."

To this Roaring Ralph readily agreed. He hoped to find some outlet, where he could reach the open air and join his comrades, who must be wondering what had become of him all the while. After proceeding some little distance they agreed to halt and rest, as it was very fatiguing work. While waiting to regain their breath, the sound of firearms being discharged reached them from the front.

"Put me in a powder horn an' roll me inter the Colorado Canyon, if they ain't in front, too! Shall we go on, or lie hyar, kimrade?" asked Ralph.

As the detective said it would be best to move forward, the old ranger did so. Presently his hand, stretched out in front of him, failed to rest upon anything solid, and the hot breath of some person fanned his cheek. Then it was that Roaring Ralph gave vent to one of his famous exclamations.

CHAPTER XVIII.—The Prairie Prince Puts on His War Paint.

Leaving matters in this shape, let us return once more to Pandy Ellis, who, breathing hard from his recent exertions, stood among the Regulators. They had selected him for their leader, and looked to him for advice. Pandy was thinking deeply. That barricade was an unexpected obstacle and bothered him considerably. How could they best demolish it without a serious loss of life on their side? His eyes fell upon the powder keg, and a risky plan in which gunpowder formed a part was shaping itself in his fertile brain, when an occurrence diverted him.

Blue Bill came into view. He had his old favorite (and well loved from the memories connected with it) lasso in his hands, and before him walked a man with bowed hands, and head drooping upon his chest, and the noose of the lasso around his neck. A torch had been resurrected, and its light revealed to the captive road-agent the stern faces of those around him, and the lowering glances gave him no hope for his life. It looked a little like the triumphal processions of old, where the victors marched before the king with their captives and trophies in their train.

"Whoa!" said Blue Bill, pulling on the lasso, and they came to a halt before Pandy.

"What hev ye hyar, old kimrade?" asked the old prairie prince.

"This critter represents the cultured gentlemen who formerly held high carnival in there underground palaces. Now, my friend," and the trapper jerked the road-agent around until he faced his threatening finger, you see these gentlemen

who surround you? They have but one mission in the world at present, and that is to make way with all such scurvy dogs as you. You see, we are not to be trifled with. Now, I have a proposition to make. Listen to it well, for your life depends on its answer: We care no more about stretching your neck than snapping a pipe stem in twain. Thar's another road into this den, don't deny it now. Lead us to whar this is, and you shall hear no more of me. If your answer is over; refuse, and by the heavens, you shall swing, and that before five minutes have gone by. Think well before you answer, for I shan't ask you again. I'll give you one full minute to consider," and the trapper pulled out a magnificent gold watch as he spoke.

The tall, dashing ranger stood with his eyes upon his watch. Around them all was silent as death itself, for the Regulators were watching this strange scene, and taking a lesson in border ways.

"Time's up," announced Blue Bill.

"I'll show you where the other opening is," said the man quickly, his mind made up.

The powder-marked features of Blue Bill relaxed into a half smile.

"Not an instant too soon, my hearty. That man thar is Pandy Ellis. He'll take charge of you now," and Bill began winding his lasso around his waist underneath the loose jacket he wore.

Pandy gave a few brief orders, and half a dozen Regulators posted themselves behind adjacent rocks ready to receive the road-agents should they see fit to make an attempt at escape by means of the front passage when attacked in the rear. These worthies looked disappointed at having been selected for sentinel duty, but Pandy cheered them up by remarking that this was the most important post of all, and it was probable they would have to bear the brunt of the battle.

The Regulators retraced their steps to the outside world, led by Pandy, who held a revolver in one hand and with the other kept hold of the road-agent's sleeve, for he did not mean him to escape. When half an hour had elapsed they were once more underground, and threading the passage that led to the great cavern direct. Nothing occurred until they came to the heavy door that had been the means of keeping Moccasin Mat an inmate of the den for so many weary months, he knowing nothing of the other passage in which the barricade had been built, so as to be ready for an emergency, with only a small opening left that could be filled up in a few minutes.

The captured road-agent put his hand to one side of the heavy door and gave a hanging cord a peculiar pull. Before half a minute had passed by they heard the sound of footsteps on the other side. The Regulator who held the lantern placed it under his coat, so that the light might not betray them before the door was opened.

"Who is it?" came in surly tones, and it was evident the doorkeeper was suspicious.

"Answer," whispered the man who had hold of the captive, seeing the fellow hesitated.

"Tom Burchard," said the man, thus sealing his doom if he ever fell into the hands of his former companions.

A rattling of the bolt followed, and then the

door swung open. Old Rattlebones was a fierce-looking old fellow, with long, unkempt gray hair and beard, and keen eyes. As the light from beyond the cavern shone through the open door and fell upon the bearded faces of the crowd of determined Regulators, the old fellow appeared to realize what an egregious blunder he had made. Giving an almost inarticulate yelp of alarm, he attempted to draw the door shut again, but it was too late.

Pandy bounded forward like a panther and sent the grizzled old fellow head over heels. He rolled in a confused pile among the stones that were piled up just inside the door and on each side of it to further strengthen the woodwork. The old peevish ranger left him there, and drawing his revolver, dashed on toward the cavern, followed by his men. Faithful to the trust reposed in him, old Rattlebones struggled to a sitting posture, and then gave vent to a piercing whistle that rang through the vaulted chambers.

This act so exasperated one of the Regulators that he stopped and emptied three chambers of his revolver in rapid succession into the grizzled fellow's body, and they had no trouble with that worthy. It took Pandy Ellis but a dozen seconds to reach the large cavern; indeed, as many huge boulders covered the space that intervened between it and the heavy door. Short as was the time that elapsed between the signal of the grizzled doorkeeper and the shots that sounded his death knell, and Pandy's reaching the cavern, yet there seemed to have been enough of it to thoroughly alarm the road-agents for as the old ranger chief bounded from the passage ready for action, a dozen fierce-looking outlaws were already in view, and many others appearing.

Pandy Ellis at once threw himself at the outlaws. It was a fierce battle. Bolly Wherrit and Blue Bill were soon at his side, and the Regulators were close behind. The outlaws were driven back, however, with great loss. The Regulators pursued them until they came upon a scene that fairly froze the blood in their veins. There stood Prince Charlie holding a blazing torch in his hand. Close beside him was a powder keg with the head knicked off. There was a tigerish gleam in his eyes.

CHAPTER XIX. The Leap of a Mad Frog.

It was certainly enough to freeze the blood in a man's veins to see that reckless mad frog standing over the open keg of powder with the flaming torch in his hand.

"Back—back, ye fiends of Tophet! Back, while ye look upon your doom! This fiery brand will light our way until we come in sight of the eternal fires. Ha! I can promise you a royal journey, by masters. 'Tis only such as we who can travel to the depths of hell on wings of living fire. Look on this and tremble."

As the insane fiend spoke he took out a handful of the powder, and casting it upon the rock, applied the torch to it. Instantly a bright flash illuminated the spot, and forced a cry of horror from some of the Regulators, whose white faces could be seen back of the hunters, they thinking that the explosion was about to occur. Poor Pandy was at his wits' end; he knew not what to

do. Turn whichever way he might, nothing but sure and speedy destruction appeared to threaten. Perhaps, after all, the madman might listen to reason. This thought seemed to strike Blue Bill at about the same time, for he pushed his way to the front and called out, in a voice so husky that no one would ever recognize it as his:

"What ho! there, Prince Charlie!"

"Who calls Prince Charlie? He is dead; I am his spirit come to avenge him. What mortal dares address me?" shouted the crazy road-agent wildly, and Blue Bill gave a groan of despair as he realized how hopeless it was to think of saving themselves by offering this crazy man his life and liberty. It was only with a great effort that Blue Bill went on:

"Throw away that torch, Prince Charlie, and not a hair of your head shall be harmed. I swear that you shall go where and when you please, but for Heaven's sake, why engulf us all in a common ruin? Surely, you have something to live for—some relative whom you love."

Strange to say, Blue Bill's words seemed only to infuriate the crazy man, and he almost foamed at the mouth, as swinging the torch wildly above his head, he yelled out:

"Ho! I am going where I please. This is a cold, cold world. I have taken a fancy to warm it up a little—Satan is my master. You know Satan? Of course you do, everyone does. I dare not disobey him. He has commanded that I come to you and bear ye to his presence on wings of fire. Satan is a fine old gentleman, a glorious master to serve, I tell ye. Now we will delay no longer, but begin the fireworks. Black sand? Who said black sand? Look here?"

A mighty shudder ran through the group of Regulators, and they held their breaths as the crazy man stooped over the powder keg. It suited his strange fancy to take out another handful, but the blazing torch was so close to the inflammable compound that a falling spark would have sent them one and all to eternity. Where had that voice come from, pronouncing the words "Black sand," that seemed to enrage the road-agent so thoroughly? None of the Regulators had spoken, and the words had come to all, seeming from directly opposite the crazy man. Prince Charlie threw the handful of powder upon the rock where the other had gone, and then stooped over it, holding the torch above it.

"Saved!" burst from the lips of old Pandy, sending a thrill of joy through the hearts of his friends, although they knew not what he meant.

A sheet of fire seemed to leap out of the wall a few yards above the crazy man, and the sharp report of a revolver sounded through the cavern and its adjacent passages. Prince Charlie's arm dropped useless to his side, broken, and the torch fell upon the rock. There was a bright flash, and the outlaws, seeing the fire, and a man in some of the Regulators shut their eyes, thinking their last minute had come. Those who watched closely saw a human form shoot down from the face of the wall and land upon the shoulders of the reckless road-agent with the precision of a tiger upon its prey. Both men went to the ground, and the sounds of a desperate struggle at once ensued. Pandy waited no time, but bounded forward. As he ran his suspicions were corroborated by hear-

ing a well-known voice from the road-agent's assailant, crying:

"Dust my Sunday breeches, but ye've got as many twists as an eel! Bar's claws and buffler hoofs, I think ye'll hev to give me a lift, Pandy! This critter's like a panther, an' the old man ain't in good trim arter all he's passed through lately."

Pandy lent his assistance, and the man was bound, hand and foot, and thrown upon the rocks, where he lay, foaming at the mouth and cursing horribly until one of the Regulators put a gag in his mouth. One other form descended from the hole in the wall from whence Roaring Ralph had leaped on to the back of the road-agent. Bolly Wherrit was standing watching some of the men overhanging the life of plunder, in the hope of finding Dare-Devil Darrel underneath it, when a hand was laid upon his arm, and, turning, he found himself face to face with Moccasin Mat, the young fellow whom he thought so much of and whose disappearance, months before, when he was on a known errand of vengeance, had troubled the old ranger greatly, and was one of his reasons for visiting the gold mines; for a desire for gain had nothing to do with it, as Pandi and Bolly were independently wealthy after the discovery of a treasure-trove that had been taken from the ancient Spanish mines and lost by the daring gold-hunters in the wilderness.

It was while Mat was relating his adventures to Bolly that a figure rushed into the cavern, wounded, bleeding, blackened from head to foot, and with his clothes blazing, and shouting for some one to "put him out, for the love of Heaven!"

It was Darrel Keene.

CHAPTER XX.—Dare-Devil Darrel in Flames.

How came the dashing chief of road-agents in such a terrible situation? Let us follow his movements and ascertain. During the struggle with the Regulators, when the stable cavern was empty, the detective had left old Ralph and Moccasin Mat in the hole in the wall, for his disguise would enable him to mingle with the outlaws if it became necessary, without much danger of detection. It was the full intention of the New York detective to make a prisoner of Darrel Keene, so that upon promise of life and liberty he would make a confession that would return Howard Lancing to his father's arms. If the road-agent should be slain in the battle all chances of righting the injured young man would be gone, unless he happened to have some proofs of his share in the foul plot upon his person, which was extremely doubtful, to say the least.

Andy Collins had witnessed the flight of Darrel Keene and Prince Charlie, and had hastened to follow them. When he reached the stable cavern, Prince Charlie was busily engaged in kicking in the head of the horse that was destined, in his mind, for such a terrible event. The detective paid little or no attention to him. Had he realized what an awful calamity threatened them, he could have very easily sent a bullet through the big road-agent and have thus rid his name in the bud. All eyes were glued upon Darrel

Keene, who, seizing a lighted torch from the wall, bounded into a passage, with the detective in hot pursuit. The light of the torch ahead of him was sufficient to guide such an experienced man hunter as Andy Collins. All at once, however, the torch seemed to be dashed to the ground, and Andy Collins heard loud voices, in which mingled oaths and the sound of blows. Then he saw the torch picked up again and held aloft by some one. Still the cries proceeded, and now the blows had developed into steel smiting against steel with all the cruel clank such a proceeding engenders.

It was a more than passing strange spectacle that Andy Collins' eyes fell upon as he drew closer to the scene of the engagement. The mysterious woman who has been seen several times during the progress of this story stood with the blazing pine knot held high above her head. Upon her face the light fell, showing features of wonderful beauty, but which now looked cold and pitiless as marble, as if the lovely woman had devoted her life to a sacred mission of vengeance for the wrong of one whom she had loved most dearly. Not long did the detective gaze upon this wonderful avenger of Belle Courcy's, for an exciting drama was taking place close to where she stood. Four men were engaged in a deadly duel, one against three.

The single duelist was Darrel Keene. His bowie knife was in his hand, and he defended himself against the three assaults of his foes. The prince of the road-agents was an accomplished swordsmen. This stood him in good stead now, for but for this he would not have been able to stand up before these three men long. It was evident that they were a fine under-study outfit, for they sought to disarm the outlaw rather than kill him. But Dare-Devil Darrel was availing himself of his opportunities, and while the detective looked on, he heard a dull thud and a cry of pain, and as one of the men staggered away, badly wounded in the chest, the road-agent's knife was seen to be dimmed.

At this instant, however, a blow from one of the men struck Darrel's knife and sent it spinning through the air. Before he could do aught to prevent them, the two brawny fellows had thrown themselves upon him, and he was powerless to resist them.

"At last!" came from the woman of vengeance, as she looked in the face of Darrel Keene; "at last we meet, and Hattie Winchester shall be avenged. Ah! You may well tremble, monster, for I am sworn to be your Nemesis. Men, do your duty!" and, thrusting the torch in the wall, she turned her back on them that she might not hear the blow.

The knife was raised, and Darrel Keene tremblingly awaiting the blow, when Andy Collins strode into view with a revolver in each hand and commanded the men to "Hold!"

"Who are you?" demanded one of the men.

"A friend to you and yours—Andy Collins, from New York, a detective in search of Darrel Keene!" and as he spoke, Andy replaced his revolvers and withdrew the hair that disguised his face.

Dare-Devil Darrel uttered a cry like that of a wild beast. He sprang at the two men, and after a short struggle threw them aside. As fate would have it, his foot slipped just then, and

CURRENT NEWS

\$600 FOR SEVEN HENS.

That a liberal thief robbed his henneries in North Bessemer, Pa., is the statement of John Alcorn, who found \$600 in his chicken coop after a raid had been made several nights ago. One morning Alcorn discovered that seven hens were missing, but found a roll of money on the floor consisting of four \$100 and four \$50 bills.

Some of Alcorn's neighbors did not fare as well. Albert Ritzman reported he was robbed of thirty chickens on the same night, but the thieves had left no money.

LIGHTNING'S CURIOUS PRANKS.

Lightning played some curious pranks on the farm of A. F. Stevens near Gravette, Ark., recently. A bolt struck a small tree and scattered bits of trunk and stump over a 400 foot space. The lightning then ploughed up the ground in different directions and for many yards. It came out of the ground and broke a telephone pole in two. It went into a wire fence and melted some of the wires. It followed a phone wire into the Stevens house, burned out the phone and exploded with a sound as loud as that of a shotgun when fired.

GALLSTONES OF CATTLE SELL AT HIGH PRICES.

Slaughter houses are the source of many curious by-products, and among the strangest, with the highest value, are the gallstones of cattle. This queer commodity, in a newly developed market, has sold at from \$160 to as high as \$225 a pound, much of it for export to Japan.

Gallstones, says Popular Mechanics, contain a large amount of cholesterin, a fatty crystalline alcohol useful in biological laboratories, which probably accounts for much of the demand, though some may be used as amulets or for barter medicines.

SAVES HUSBAND, LOSES ARM

Her determination to save her husband from being ground to death beneath the wheels of a train cost Mrs. Ota Mitchell, aged 20, of Perry County, Ky., an arm.

The husband, James Mitchell, had become intoxicated and his wife found him lying on the railroad tracks. She rushed to his aid and tried to pull him off the tracks.

Her efforts were in vain, and she was too heavy for the task. She was struck by the train and her arm was crushed. She was dragged for some distance, tearing her arm so that it had to be amputated. She may not recover.

EMERALD EMERALD COMES TO NEW YORK.

An uncut emerald of the finest quality, said to be the largest in the world since the days of Cortes, arrived the other day for the Colombian Emerald Syndicate of No. 80 West street, to whom it belonged.

The green bangle, taken from the Chivor mine, is two and five-eighths inches long and about

twice that depth. The stone will be sent to an appraiser, who will examine it for hexagonal depths. It will be cut into small gems, as there is no demand for a stone of such large dimensions.

The largest emerald in existence today weighs 1,000 carats and is in Bogota.

A LONG SMOKE.

The famous cigar smoker in the world is a man who has smoked for over 50 years. He has smoked 100,000 cigars. It was a California miner who said that he would smoke six cigars, six cigars and six pipes of strong tobacco within an hour. He accomplished the task, was seized with heart failure immediately afterwards and never smoked again. The tenor Mario was a famous singer, twenty-five to thirty ordinary sized cigars a day, and in Italy, where he could not obtain cigars, he used to smoke daily a hundred cigars. They say that Edwin Booth smoked twenty-five cigars a day. Mark Twain ran him close.

FIND MAN HALF BURNED.

An unidentified white man, nude and dead, his skull crushed and his flesh burned from his body down, was found the other day in the woods near Monroe, La. The man, believed by local people to have come here from Houston, Tex., died without regaining consciousness.

Evidence that coal oil had been poured on the body was found by officers, and a smoldering fire near where the man was found indicated that the man had been thrown on it.

Tattoo marks, "W. L." and the name of "Coleman," a Houston, Tex., hat firm, in the hand, were the only marks of identification that could be found.

20 PER CENT. DISCOUNT PUT ON CANADIAN COIN.

In an effort to break up the operations of a gang of money exchangers, Cleveland, Ohio, acting through the Cleveland Commercial Club, has decided to accept Canadian coin only at a discount of 20 per cent. This was taken after a committee of the club had agreed to discount silver and paper money.

Organized gangs have been flooding the cities of the country with Canadian coin, and have been making profits of thousands of dollars. American banks have lost, according to one person, manager of the commercial bank of the foreign department of the Guaranty and Trust Company, one of the largest banks in the city.

A person with \$8,950 in American money exchanged it across the border for 10,000 Canadian coins, because of the difference in exchange, bankers say. This money had been brought back to the country and placed in circulation at par.

The discount rate will be permanent and will not change with the exchange rate, bankers announced.

CHARLIE CHAPMAN'S COURAGE

—OR—

THE BOY WHO TOOK CARE OF HIS MOTHER

By WILLIAM WADSWORTH

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXI.—(continued)

He looked at the prosperous young fellow.

"Say, youngster, take it from me, and keep a sharp lookout along the roads between here and Rodney, for there is quite a gang of bums on the road. I'll give you a trial for a week. If you take the road on to Fernbank, which is straight east by this track, I'll let you try out on some work for me which will demand the gift of a pig. If you make good I'll make it pay you. And I'll provide you with some decent duds and about a quarter's worth of soap."

The youth clucked to his nag, and then stopped her on an afterthought.

"By jingo, I'll give you a trial for a week. If you take the road on to Fernbank, which is straight east by this track, I'll let you try out on some work for me which will demand the gift of a pig. If you make good I'll make it pay you. And I'll provide you with some decent duds and about a quarter's worth of soap."

The hobo thought he was joking, but Charlie's earnest face proved the contrary.

"All right, friend, I'll take it, just because I never did it before in my life. No one ever offered me anything but chopping a hickory wood pile, or something like that since I struck the great trail. What's your name?"

"Charlie Chapman, and I'll be at the big stable in Fernbank for business to-morrow morning. Good-by; don't lose your nerve, but show up!"

he called.

Then he turned his nag and jogged forward. The first ragged tramp sitting there on the edge of a pile of straw.

"Well, of all things, I was kidding him, but by jingo, I'll take him at his word."

And the young fellow started for Fernbank. Then he remembered something which he had left back on the track at the hobo's rendezvous, and he retraced his steps for about a quarter of a mile.

The roadway on which Charlie was traveling took a roundabout course, and the lad brought up near a farmhouse which was in reality not more than a few hundred yards from the glen in which the tramp was looking for a lost Barlow knife.

Charlie was driving past the house, with a casual glance into the yard, when he saw two ragged figures dart across the rear of the place and hear a scream.

"What's that?" he wondered.

Then he saw a second pair of tramps rush

across the grounds, with wriggling chickens in their hands.

"Ah, ha, they are taking their choice from the hen roosts. That is a woman's voice, as sure as I'm Charlie Chapman."

He leaped to the ground, tied his horse with a quick slip of the halter, and grabbed the sturdy buggy whip.

With one bound he vaulted the paling fence, and started on a run for the back yard.

He swung about the farmhouse corner, and beheld one rough-looking hobo holding a woman's hands behind her back, while he laughed with loud guffaws.

"Help yersel's, fellers," he cried. "I've got the purty gal just whar she cain't do nawthin'."

The woman, young and comely at that, writhed and twisted.

"Oh, if my husband were here, he'd kill you for this," she cried, faintly.

"Well, he ain't. Git them young turkeys, boys," cried her captor, as the others chased the frightened fowl, "we want her have a fine roastin' bee. Hurry. I killed the dawg with knockout drops."

Just then Charlie sprang forward, and he brought the whip across the face of the man holding the woman's wrists.

It was a dexterous blow, and it made the fellow screech in a hoarse voice.

The hoboes dropped their spoils and turned upon him.

"No, you don't," said Charlie, as the first one tried to strike him. Charlie swung the whip so skilfully that he flected away with the cracker against the fellow's face.

It was a painful but very successful frick.

This man ran backwards.

But the other desperate bums rushed at the youth, and he was outnumbered and overpowered by their sudden onslaught.

CHAPTER XXII.

Charlie's Ragged Friend to the Rescue.

For a few minutes it seemed as though the youth who had gone to the rescue of the frightened young woman would pay for his temerity with his life.

Charlie was under the pile of hoboes, who were all trying to jab and kick and punch at him at one and the same instant.

Many a grunt and execration went up from the men as they punished each other by mistake, for a foot or a fist would occasionally strike the wrong body.

"Oh, they're killing him!" shrieked the woman, as she wrested herself free from the grip of the detaining hobo, who held her hands behind her.

He was abstracted in this new fight, and the woman managed to run quickly toward the kitchen door.

"Stop!" yelled the brutal fellow.

But the woman desperately rushed inside the door, and swung it shut.

In a jiffy she grabbed for the rope of the farm bell that hung right above the kitchen.

"Ding, ding, clang, clang!"

(To be continued.)

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES.

ROB BANK OF \$119,000; THEN DESTROY IT BY FIRE.

The Commonwealth National Bank at Reedville, Va., was robbed of cash and securities totaling \$119,000 and then set on fire, according to reports received the other day by the Washington Police Department.

The collector of customs at Reedville in reporting the robbery said it had occurred at about 2:30 o'clock and that the robbers were believed to have escaped in an automobile. The building, a two-story frame structure, was destroyed. The door to the vault and that of the safe inside were found open, it was said.

The cash missing was placed by bank officials at \$19,000, while the \$100,000 in securities included a large amount of Liberty bonds.

SOME REMARKABLE FIGURES.

We are told repeatedly that the horse is passing out of sight. Two or three years more and you may still discover the dust of the trail over which he has vanished, but he will be gone. In the face of such assertions, generally made by the auto-truck and tractor advertisers, it is interesting to read the statements of Mr. F. E. Durrall, president of the National Wholesale Saddling Association. He says, following Government reports, that the number of horses increased in the United States more than 1,701,000 from 1910 to 1920; that since 1870 the horse population has increased 203.3 per cent., as compared with 176.6 per cent., the rate for the human inhabitants. He says, further, that the market price for horses has increased 125 per cent. since 1900, and that of the 6,500,000 farms in this country, only 3 per cent. use tractors, and that the harness makers are making and selling more harnesses than ever.

A CLOCK BUILT OF STRAW.

From Switzerland, the home of the watch and clock industry, comes the description of a clock made entirely of straw and willow withes. Of course there is no particular value in the use of this material, except to demonstrate the ingenuity of the clockmaker. In this clock there is not a single piece of metal. Even the chimes are made of straw put through a special process, so as to give them a ringing tone when struck. Instead of the ordinary swinging pendulum, this clock is provided with a see-saw movement, there being two weights on each side. One great difficulty in making the interior mechanism of the clock was to get the proper elasticity in the springs, which were pressed and turned into coils very much resembling Chinese bamboo. The clock is nine feet high with a face eighteen inches in diameter. The base is of wicker construction from which four heavy linked straw chains serve as guys to keep the clock properly balanced. The movement operates twenty-four hours on each winding. It took over thirty months to complete the clock.

THE DOGS OF DAMASCUS.

It is estimated that there are anywhere from 15,000 to 20,000 dogs in Damascus, and they are all pariahs, says a writer in the Christian Science Monitor. Each has his or her corner on a certain street and there is no protection for those canines who stray into territory not their own. In bands of ten to twenty, they patrol the city by day, and at night time when they are not adding to the noises of the Orient by vocal protests against the ways of the world, they sleep in every nook and cranny about the thoroughfares.

They are always hungry and it needs only the call, "Suk, suk, suk," to rouse them in legions, for by that token of Eastern speech they know that some one, for some reason, is about to feed them bread.

But wander about the different streets in search of food? Not they! Rather do they maintain a "splendid isolation" and refuse to stray from their own street, or even from their particular end of the street. For they are clannish beyond measure, and their prejudices are distinctly insular even when they are extremely hungry.

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THE MAD KIDNAPER

By Horace Appleton.

Never, so long as I live, shall I forget that night!

There are several reasons why the memory of it is grafted on my mind.

I was on my way to the West, on a business matter of importance, and had taken the night express out of the Grand Central Depot.

We made a stop at Yonkers, where the train was boarded by a lady of middle age, bearing in her arms a babe of about a year.

We made another stop at Peekskill for water, and here the train was boarded by a short, thick-set man, with a short-cut mustache, giving a set and dogged look to a face naturally cast in hard lines.

He gave a keen glance up and down the car, and then proceeding direct to the lady I have mentioned, touched her on the shoulder, saying quietly:

"Madam, I have to trouble you to bear me company."

"What do you mean?" she indignantly demanded.

"I mean that you are now in my custody until we can determine if this is a child from Yonkers," mentioning the very station where she had boarded the car.

"I will not go with you!" she said sharply.

"Yes you will," was the grim rejoinder, after consulting a telegram and comparing its description with herself. "I shall not exceed my duty in arresting you."

"And I say that I will not go!" she cried.

Then casting an appealing glance around, she cried:

"Gentlemen, I call on you for protection! This man wants to force me from the train. He has some evil scheme in view! Surely you will not let him harm me? Oh, where is the conductor? I want the conductor!"

The conductor at this moment put in an appearance.

He sharply asked what the trouble was, and then demanded of the man some basis for the disturbance he was creating.

From where I sat I could see the man display a badge, and then, stepping forward, saw the dispatch that he handed the conductor.

It said:

"Board train that has just left Yonkers—the night express—and arrest woman of thirty-five, fashionably dressed, brown eyes, having a child of a year and two months with her. Child is stolen. The woman is mad. Stealing children is her mania."

When she found that no one would interfere in her behalf the woman began to rave and act wildly. At last she began to froth at the mouth, her eyes glared, every nerve and muscle was writhing under the influence of a frenzy telling of unsettled reason.

The officer was compelled to put handcuffs on her before he could lift her from the train.

Long after the train was again in motion I

sat there, shuddering now and then. I tried to read, to do something to drive from my mind the scene she had presented, but found it impossible. In despair I at last arose and went into the smoking-car, and dropping into an unoccupied seat, began puffing away at a Havana.

The man beside whom I had seated myself was not far from my own age, and a minute later said:

"Do you remember of ever meeting me?"

"I can't say that I do."

"I remember you, however," he said with a smile, and drew a circumstance to my mind.

"That brings back your face," I said. "And, Mr. Drew, our house has since been recipients of your favors."

"Not to so great an extent as I could wish, both for their benefit and mine."

After that we chatted pleasantly, and he was telling me of his home, and his wife, and his baby, when something happened.

It was unexpected—was over before I had fairly time to grasp what was coming. There had been a smashup.

My head was spinning, my eyes were filled with a painful stinging, I was almost choking, when reason came slowly back to me. It was only a second later that I discovered that the overturned smoker was on fire. I thought of Mr. Drew, and called him by name.

In a weak voice came the reply:

"Here I am, pinned under a seat."

With almost Herculean strength—I had never shown as much strength before, and never have since—I began working at the seat, and finally succeeded in releasing Drew. I then got him out of a window in time to escape the fire that was rapidly enveloping the car.

As I bent beside Drew, even my inexperienced eyes could not fail to recognize that he was dying. He must have guessed what was in my mind—perhaps my face showed it—and he said, pitifully:

"Mr. Haven, I think that I shall not get over this. Will you attend to me, and—and—if I should die before—before I see my wife, will you tell her that my last thought was a hope that she would forgive me—that I felt then how great a wrong I did her when I pressed a marriage while knowing that she did not love me as a wife should. I—I—"

A spasm of anguish distorted his face, and though he made several attempts to add something further, no intelligible word ever after crossed his lips. He died an hour later.

In accordance with the promise I had made him, I remained by him to the last, and, further than that, accompanied the remains to his home.

At the first sight of Edith Drew something like an electric shock went through me. It was all I could do to control myself and tell the weeping woman how it had all happened. I could not bring myself to say anything of the lack of love that he had mentioned in his dying moments, and only told her of the occurrences of the night in a casual way.

Before I left the house I saw a two months' old babe—a bright little thing of a boy—who bore his father's name of Edwin.

I don't think I ever knew what it was after

that to have the face of Ethel Drew absent from me for more than a few minutes at a time. I laughed at myself, called myself a fool and a score of other hard names, but all to no purpose. Good or bad, love or absurdity, Ethel Drew was always in my mind.

Several times she had occasion to write to me in connection with the accident on the road in which her husband lost his life, and I came to feel as though I knew her very well. This feeling was not lessened by her cordial reception when I went to call on her on an occasion when in the city of her residence, several months later. I called on her, I think, as often as once in two weeks, after that, and always found her the same. There was nothing in her demeanor toward me that was aught but the purest friendliness, and chafed and fumed because it was so. Her whole existence was wrapped up in her boy.

It was slightly over a year after the death of her husband when I again called. She had laid aside her mourning, and presented an appearance of loveliness ravishing to my eyes. I felt more madly in love with her than ever, but I could not fail to see that she looked upon me in a far different light.

We were talking lightly, when suddenly the nurse came rushing in. At once Mrs. Drew was on her feet. In an excited voice she cried:

"Edwin!—something has happened to him—your face tells me so! Speak—quick! What is it?"

"Gone!" gasped the girl, sinking in a heap on the floor.

Mrs. Drew started for the door. She was reeling before she reached it, and going down on her knees she reached forth her hands and clutched the garments of a lady just entering.

"Edwin!" she cried. "He is gone—stolen!"

I was the only cool person there. From the girl I gathered by dint of questioning and patching together the incoherent answers, that she had left the little fellow in his carriage at the foot of the lawn for a few seconds while she returned to the house for something.

Thus matters stood when night closed in. It was quite late, and I was thinking of going to my hotel, when questioning the nurse for the dozenth time, I said:

"You are sure that nobody has been seen around here to-day of a suspicious character, or whom you might think possible would steal the child?"

"No, not a living soul—" She halted suddenly and caught her breath.

"So! You have recalled somebody?"

"A woman, sir. I remember now that there is a woman whom I have seen pass several times.

"Can you give me a description of this woman?"

"I didn't look very sharply, sir, but I know she had eyes that seemed to have fire underneath them."

"How was she dressed?"

"Nicely, sir."

Suddenly across my mind flashed the picture of the woman who had stolen the child from Yonkers that awful night when Mrs. Drew's husband was killed.

I left the house in a state of mind hopeful yet fearful. I made my way to police headquarters,

and made inquiries for such a woman as I had seen that night a year before.

At first nobody could tell me anything, but at last some one said that a woman answering the description could be found at a certain house.

Thither I went. An hour later I knew that I had been sent on a false scent. Disappointed, I returned cityward, and spent the remaining hours of the night restlessly tossing on my bed. I was awake and out of doors by shortly after daylight, and I had not gone three blocks when I saw the child-stealer of a year before. I followed him through the streets of the city, followed her close to and past the home of the bereaved mother. Beyond that was the country, many of the spots as wild and untamed as though it were a hundred miles into the wilderness. On the woman went, and at last turned aside into a piece of wood. Still I followed, and just as I saw her open the door of a rude building and enter I heard the wail of a young child.

A few minutes later I was at an open window that afforded a view of the interior. What I saw froze the blood in my veins. The child—and it was Edwin—lay on a sort of bureau, and the woman stood beside it, revolver in hand.

While I remained there, in an agony of mind to be convinced, but not described, the woman spoke. In a bitter tone she said:

"Your mother calls you pretty innocent. I didn't doubt! Ha! ha! It is one of the fictions of mothers—there never was a man or boy who was innocent. They are all—all—all as treacherous and cruel as the Evil One himself. I wish it were in my power to avenge the wrongs of my sex upon them by sweeping all from the world. But—ha! ha!—I do all that is in my power!"

A man coming along just at this moment, enlisted him in my service, and we rushed into the house and captured the woman.

We delivered her to the city authorities later, and before night had learned that the woman had but recently escaped from the madhouse, where she had been immured after stealing the child from Yonkers, one year before.

We also learned her sad history. A man professed love for her on whom she showered a devotion that was her whole existence. At the wedding altar he had deserted her. His baseness was exposed by a letter she received from him, telling her that he already had a wife, after she had donned her wedding garments.

From the moment of my restoring Edwin to his hotel, when questioning the nurse for the I could see that she felt a great gratitude for saving her child, and it bade me hope for the best. In the course of a couple of months I ventured to tell her something of my feelings toward her.

"I had thought to live for my child alone," she answered, "but you saved him for me. I believe you love him, too, and"—she blushed then as she added—"I will frankly say that you are the first man who has ever possessed my whole heart."

I told her then that I knew it had never been given to another before, and—well, we have been married some time, and neither has had reason to regret the choice we made.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, MARCH 9, 1921

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166 West 23d St., New York

ITEMS OF INTEREST

SHOES OF OSTRICH SKIN.

Ostrich skin shoes, in smart tan or sober black, which is claimed will outwear leather footwear and cost less, soon will be seen in Boston. The consignment of ostrich skins arrived here lately in an American steamship from south Africa.

Manufacture of the shoes will begin immediately, and they will be offered to women and men as an Easter novelty.

FINDS AN HONEST THIEF.

E. D. Hass, railroad yardmaster, Sioux City, who was robbed of \$12, declared that he had discovered an honest thief when he received the following note:

"I'm the fellow who robbed you. I was broke and out of a job and my wife and kids were going hungry. But I got a job here and as soon as I get a little money ahead I will return what I stole from you."

Hass said if he knew who the man was he would give him "another \$12 for being so honest."

RIVAL TO MAMMOTH CAVE.

It is believed that the discovery of a great cavern in Hart County, Ky., which may rival Mammoth Cave, will result in a general exploration of caves all over the State in the hope of finding remains of prehistoric people. Mammoth Cave was discovered in Mammoth Cave, and a skeleton was in the cave discovered in Hart County.

Prof. A. M. Miller, geologist and archaeologist at the University of Kentucky, said the other night that caves and "rock houses" in the Kentucky hills were used for burial of early people, and the bones and relics of prehistoric man would be found. He disagrees with Dr. E. W. Berry of Johns Hopkins University who claimed there was no evidence of early peoples burying their dead in caves.

There are over 1,000 caves in Kentucky, situated in every part of the State. Lexington itself is built over one.

CODE OF APPROVAL SIGNALS.

Register of Motor Vehicles Frank A. Goodwin of Massachusetts has approved a series of hand

signals for power vehicle drivers which are practically the same as have been approved by the state officials of Connecticut, and the Massachusetts Safe Roads Federation has undertaken to carry on a campaign of education among all who own and drive automobile cars and trucks. The signals are described as given by a driver seated at the left side of the machine, but they can be given just as well with either hand. The code is as follows: Stop; extend the left arm and hold it stationary, with all fingers extended and close together. Left turn; extend the left arm and hold it stationary, with the index finger pointing and the outer three fingers closed. Right turn; extend the left arm with the fingers extended and the palm upward and rotate it from the rear to the front. Back; extend the left arm with the fingers open and close together and the palm vertical, and move it upward and downward from a horizontal position. Turning: give the "Left Turn" signal and repeat it until the vehicle has been turned and can be driven directly ahead. When turning always drive forward and turn into and with the traffic moving in the direction opposite to line of original movement. The arm of the driver should always be extended full length and held a sufficient length of time to justify observation of the drivers following.

LAUGHS

Jeans—No, I never take the newspapers home. I've a family of grown-up daughters, you know. Beans—Papers too full of crime, eh? Jeans—No, too full of bargain sales.

Stern Father—Young man, the lights are put out at ten o'clock in this house. Fresh Suitor—Could you not make an exception to-night and then put them out a little earlier.

"That," observed a friend of the family, "is a very superior woman. She can converse intelligently, I believe, on a thousand different topics." "Yes," sighed her husband; "and she does."

"Miss Biggs is interested in you, pa." "How so?" "Why, to-day, after she told me several times to sit down and behave myself, she said she wondered what sort of a father I had."

"I wonder," said the man of a statistical turn, "how much powder is destroyed daily in useless salutes?" "There must be a lot," replied the frivolous girl. But, I suppose, women will go on using it."

Godfather—Why aren't you at school, Bobby? Bobby—'Cause I read in the history book that great an' successful men usually started in life without any educational advantages, and I'm more ambitious than other boys!"

"Mamma," said Elsie, who had heard her papa and mamma discussing household economics, "we have to be very saving, don't we?" "Yes, dear, but come now; take your cod liver oil and—"

"But I was just thinking, suppose we economize on cod liver oil!"

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

THIEF SWALLOWS MONEY.

After he had been searched without avail, Abraham Abida, an Egyptian cashier, accused of the theft of \$1,000 in bills, was taken ill in the police station in Paris.

An emetic was given and soon Abida "coughed up" the missing bank notes. He then confessed that he had chewed and swallowed them when dining with the detectives who arrested him.

HUNT FOX WITH MOTOR.

They even hunt foxes my motor car down in the Allerton neighborhood. Three citizens were returning from Lineville, Mo., recently when a fox ran across the road ahead. Whereupon they let out a "view halloo" which made the car snort and prance. The game was to the swift and the fox, blinded by the car lights, was finally run down. He surrendered a fine skin to be made into a rug.

NEW DIVINGSUIT TESTED.

An 850-pound divingsuit invented by Rudi Degraff, a resident of Pear Street, New York City, received tests recently off Long Island, northeast of Montauk Point.

The suit, which is made of special rubber over the joints; with the upper section of aluminum steel and the lower section of gun metal, is flexible when dropped 264 feet and left at that depth for fifteen minutes it was found that less than one gill of water had seeped in. No air pressure had been used. The breaking down of a dynamo operating the air pump prevented a second test.

The inventor asserts that the suit will enable a diver to ascend 700 feet and work several hours under water.

SAYS HUSBAND SOLD HER.

Mrs. Cora Marie Johnson would like to be out of the lock-up at the Harrison Street Police Station, Chicago. She hopes that Berger Peterson, a butcher, of Rockford, Ill., will get a writ of habeas corpus for her. Possibly a writ of replevin would be the proper paper, for Mrs. Johnson considers herself as a "chattel" as the result of a "marital deal."

Enoch Johnson husband of the nineteen-year-old girl, sold her to Berger Peterson for a vacant lot in Rockford, valued at \$500, she said, after Enoch, Berger and the latter's brother, Gus, had been arrested when the former sought to take his wife from a rooming house. All are held pending an investigation of the "sale."

Mrs. Johnson declared the transfer was made by a written agreement drawn up by a notary, stipulating that her husband relinquished all rights in consideration of the real estate.

FIND COLLEGE 'BOOZE RING.'

Superior Judge A. C. Hoppman held a conference with students of the University of Wisconsin in an effort to get co-operation in rooting out moonshine. The judge said that the moonshine ring was a "big business" and that the students should help him to break it up.

University of Wisconsin students have been asked to help Judge Hoppman in his fight against moonshine. The judge said that the moonshine ring was a "big business" and that the students should help him to break it up.

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SAVINGS BANKS DEPOSITS TOTAL

\$2,588,320,292 NOW

If the total resources of the 142 savings banks in New York State were converted into six dollars and laid side by side, they would form two shimmering bands stretching round the world according to figures made public by the Savings Banks' Association of the State of New York.

The association's statement says:

"At the last reckoning total resources of 141 savings banks of the association were \$2,588,320,282. The distance around the globe is approximately 132,000,000 feet. As the dollar is an inch and a half wide, it would take \$1,050,000,000 to circle the world.

"It is 238,862 miles to the moon. If a pair of dollars were made from the earth to the moon, it would take 10,089,530,880 dollars to go from point to point. The dollars of the savings banks would extend more than one-fifth of the distance.

A NOVEL MAIL BAG.

"How many people know that South America can boast of the simplest postoffice in the world? It would take considerable guessing on the part of the reader to locate this postoffice, for he would find it at the very end of the continent. Even then he might not recognize it.

"Opposite Tierra del Fuego is a very high, rocky cliff overhanging the Strait of Magellan, and from one of the rocks is suspended, by a long chain, a barrel which receives mail. There is no postmaster, nor is there any regular letter carrier or collector, but every boat that goes through the strait stops and sends its letters to this curious little postoffice, looks over the letters that are in it to see if there are any for the men on board that particular ship, and then sends them back to the strait. Therein letters for seamen on board ships that are known to be headed for the strait.

"Who was the person that first thought of such a scheme we are not told, but the sailors think a great deal of their unique postoffice, and there has never yet, to any knowledge, been any violation of the confidence reposed in it. When a sailor sends a letter to it addressed to another seaman he is sure of its delivery. It may be that one of the seamen is on a vessel which is not expected to pass by this ocean postoffice, but the letter may have on it a request that a vessel going out to sea shall pick it up and deliver it to a certain point where the seaman is sure to meet it. In this manner letters have been known to make their way to the Atlantic Ocean, or even to India."

INTERESTING NEWS ARTICLES

WOMAN SHOOT'S BOY AND GIRL

Suddenly becoming insane, Mrs. Pearl Duryea, forty years old, wife of a typewriter company employee, shot her two children, Ruth, aged thirteen, and Gerald, aged ten, through the heads as they slept in their beds in the Duryea home at Peruville, ten miles northeast of Ithica, N. Y. Both children died within a few hours. Mrs. Duryea attempted to commit suicide, but the act was frustrated by her husband. She was brought to Utica and locked up on a charge of homicide.

MAY FIND DIAMONDS.

Formations in Hardin County in the southeastern part of Illinois resemble those of the Johannesburg district, South Africa, and may contain diamonds according to an announcement by Francis W. Shepherdson, Director of the State Department of Education.

"Hardin County," said Mr. Shepherdson, "is, geologically speaking, a part of the Ozark mountains. It presents what geologists term a fault. This fault is akin to the formation of the diamond fields of South Africa, which are the richest in the world's history. No diamonds have been found in Hardin County yet, but if geological conditions are not misleading the presence of diamonds is not improbable. One of the world's best fluospar mines is in this part of Illinois."

Twenty-two diamonds were turned up by a farmer's plow in 1912 in the southern part of Illinois. One of these weighed $7\frac{1}{4}$ carats. These are the only diamonds ever found in the State. More than twenty diamonds have been found in Indiana and a half dozen in Wisconsin, but these are supposed by geologists to have been washed down from the region of Hudson Bay in the glacial age. The only diamond mine in the United States is in Pike County, Arkansas. More than 5,000 diamonds have been taken from it, including one of 17 1-4 carats.

Pike County is also geologically akin to the Ozarks. The Arkansas diamond mine was discovered in 1906, but systematic mining did not begin until last spring. It is now in regular operation.

EFFECTS OF MILD WEATHER.

Up in Mill Pond, N. H., Harry Fairbanks, of Boston, evicted a lethargic frog which was passing the winter decorating the interior of a 15-inch pickerel which Mr. Fairbanks caught through the ice. When the frog realized that Mr. Fairbanks was entirely in earnest in his proceedings it gave him a scathing glance, went into the house and lay down under the stove.

Tucker Gibson is worried about his bird-hunting hog, the marvel of the Louisiana canebrakes. Mr. Gibson took the hog to Natchez, Miss., to groom him for a career in vaudeville, and in preparation for his intensive training took along a cage with three quail in it. Finding it necessary to return to his home temporarily, Mr. Gib-

son left hog and birds in a hotel stable, plentifully supplied with food and water.

He returned the other day and discovered the hog gaunt and tottering beside its untouched food and tenaciously holding a "point." The cage containing the quail had been hung above the hog and for three days he had held his point, abstaining from food and drink. The animal is on the verge of a nervous collapse and may bring higher figures in his stage contract.

A short-legged gray bird, about the size of a duck, but with a long bill like a heron's, which is bright scarlet, swooped down upon Mrs. F. D. Manchester's chicken yard in Cornwall, Vt., and was making friends with Mrs. Manchester's Plymouth Rock hens when the rooster interfered, and after a long and bloody battle killed the intruder.

Ten bluebirds, flying north, were seen on Miss Sarah Brassill's front lawn in Weymouth, Mass.

SALTIER LAKE.

When five capitalists of Calgary bought a small lake near Senlac, Canada, recently the country people laughed. The joke was that hard-headed business men should be so foolish as to invest real money in 187 acres of water.

The lake has been known for years as the Dead Sea. Though a few miles away rich farm lands stretch on every side, the country immediately about it is a desolate, treeless prairie. Encircling it are beaches white with heavy incrustations of salt that at a distance resemble the breaking of continuous surf. In its snowy border the green lake suggests a giant emerald set in white enamel.

Boys who swim in its deep holes can lie on the surface without motion as on a feather bed, and could go to sleep comfortably if they wished. Standing upright without touching the bottom, nearly half their bodies are out of the water. Those who dive bob up to the surface like corks. It is almost impossible to sink.

Before purchasing the "worthless" pond the capitalistic quintet had the water analyzed. It contained from 52 to 55 per cent. salt. This is a salt content greater than that of the Dead Sea in Palestine and five times greater than that of the Great Salt Lake of Utah. The Saskatchewan Lake is believed to be the saltiest body of water in the world.

The new proprietors began at once to operate a solar plant on the shores to extract the salt from the water. Its output is ten tons a day. They have begun the erection of an evaporation plant which, it is said, will increase production to 500 tons a day. The salt is the kind used for packing, refrigeration and livestock.

The lake, once regarded as worthless, will prove, it is said, a gold mine to its owners. Experts declare it contains enough salt to supply all Western Canada and make it independent of Utah, from which most of the country's salt heretofore has been imported. The lake has neither inlet nor outlet, but is fed by saline springs which well up, it is believed, from vast salt deposits deep in the earth.

SURPLUS OF WOMEN IN AUSTRIA

The Austrian census of population taken Jan. 31, 1920, shows that the number of females has markedly increased, both absolutely and relatively, and in all age groups, says the Journal of the A. M. A. There are 1,037 females for every thousand males in the whole of Austria, but for Vienna alone the figures are 1,163 to 1,000, an increase of seventy-seven males as compared to 1910.

But if we take into consideration only those persons classed as of a marriageable age—all unmarried females or males over nineteen years—we get quite a different aspect. In Vienna we find 1,413 females to 1,000 males at present, whereas ten years ago it was 1,227 to 1,000. In the rural districts the picture is not so appalling, but even there the ratio is never under 1,100 to 1,000, meaning that for one-tenth of the females cannot hope to marry. Very striking is the change in the industrial and mining districts of our country. While in 1910 there was in these places a distinct surplus of males, now the females outnumber their mates by from 42 to 117 per thousand.

BOYS! BOYS! BOYS!

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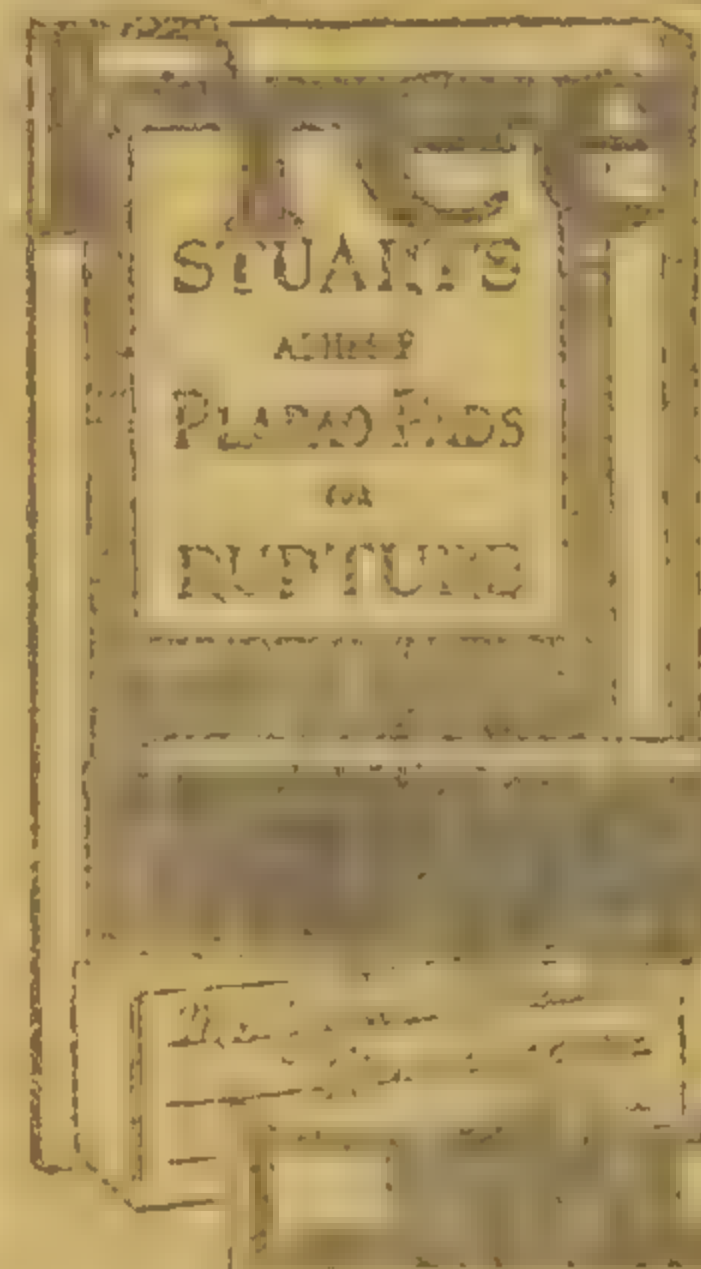
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That I was alone, had and he by is expressing my state of mind well.

Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade.

I negotiated for and came into possession of the principle for preparing this mysterious elixir, now called Kotelko, and later had the

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A GOLD MINE IN A GARAGE

Some time ago while excavating for a large underground gasoline tank at the Grass Valley Garage, Nevada County, California, Mr. A. B. Snyder, the owner, uncovered a well-defined ledge of gold quartz at a depth of six feet. Mr. Snyder decided to do some mining inside of his garage. A windlass was installed and a shaft sunk, and in a short time some beautiful gold specimens were extracted from below the garage floor. The shaft was sunk to a depth of sixty feet.

During the mining operations several tons of gold quartz were taken out of the shaft and drifts under the garage. This was crushed and milled in a nearby stampmill. The quartz gave returns of \$137.50 per ton.

After working the mine for a short time the waste dirt taken out accumulated in a large pile which extended the full length of the floor inside the building, leaving little room for automobiles. Mr. Snyder decided he had mined enough and shut down. A local gold-mining company then purchased the mineral rights under the garage and are now working the ledge through their mine.

ELECTRICAL MARVELS WITH CRYSTALS

Interesting experiments with Rochelle salts at the International Communications Conference are reported in Science and Invention.

The first surprise was a demonstration with Rochelle salt crystals. "When it comes to gymnastics," explained the engineer in charge, "no one has anything on the Rochelle salt crystals." And every one agreed.

It was shown that when these crystals are twisted or pressed an electric current flows from them — is squeezed from them, as the engineer put it. And conversely, when a current flows into them they wiggle and wobble in a most capricious fashion. There was a phonograph with the ordinary reproducer replaced by a salt crystal. From this crystal wires were led to another crystal placed in a phonographic horn and when the phonograph was turned on, the first crystal wriggled, producing currents which made the second crystal wiggle so violently that rich music poured from the horn.

How to open a safe without knowing the combination or wrecking the strong box was next demonstrated.

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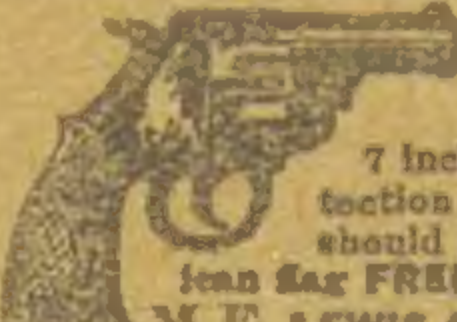
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